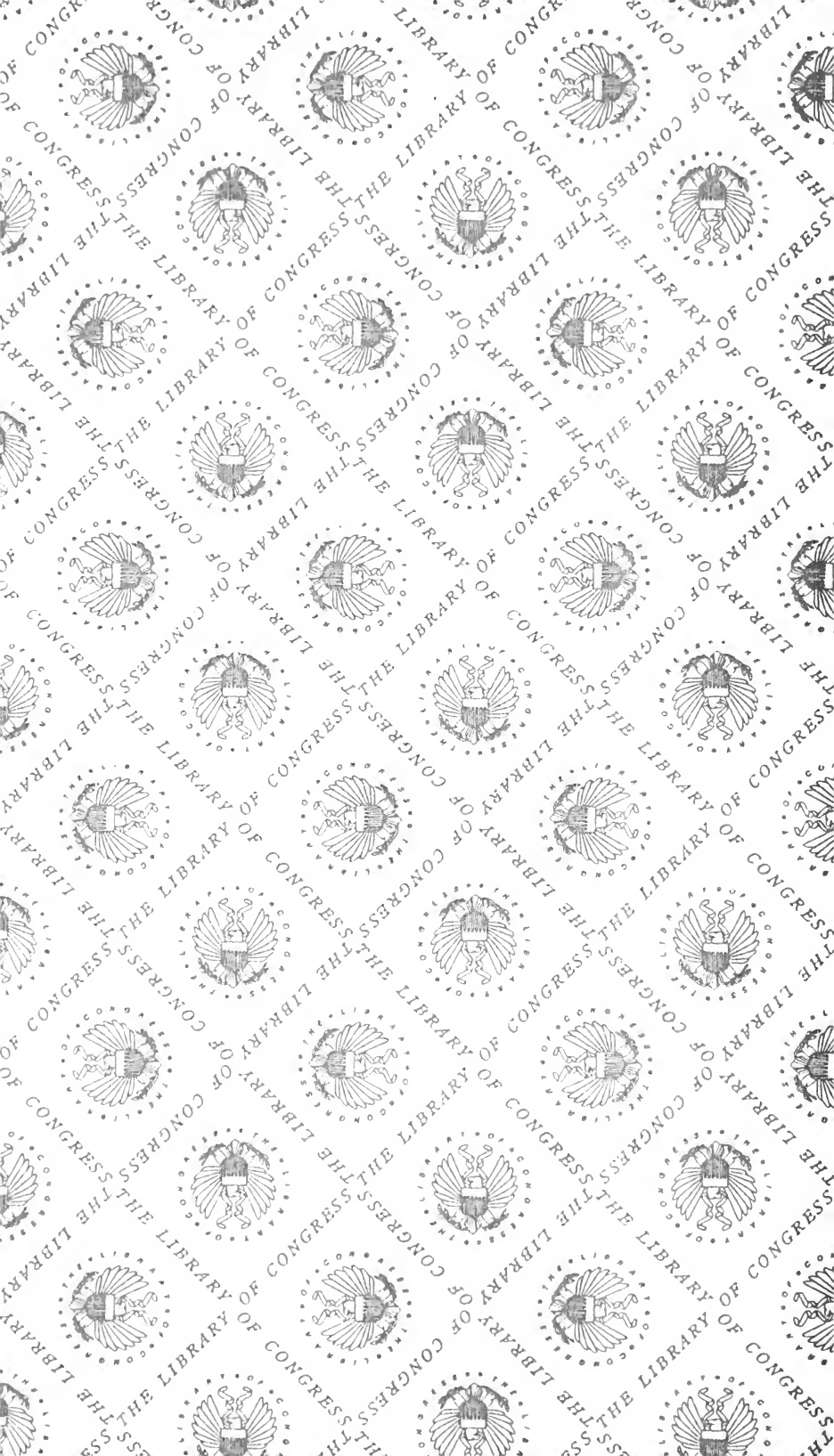
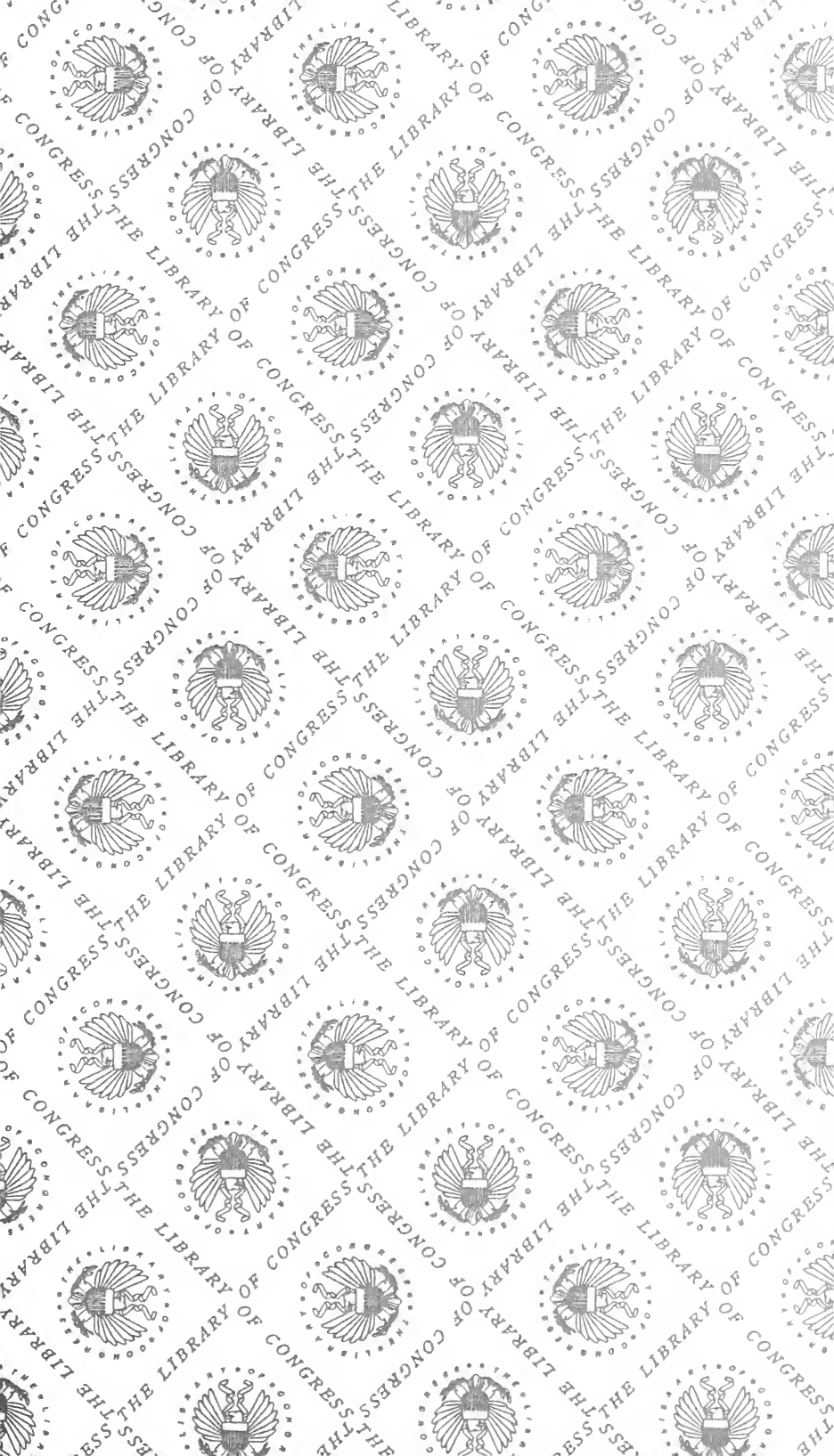


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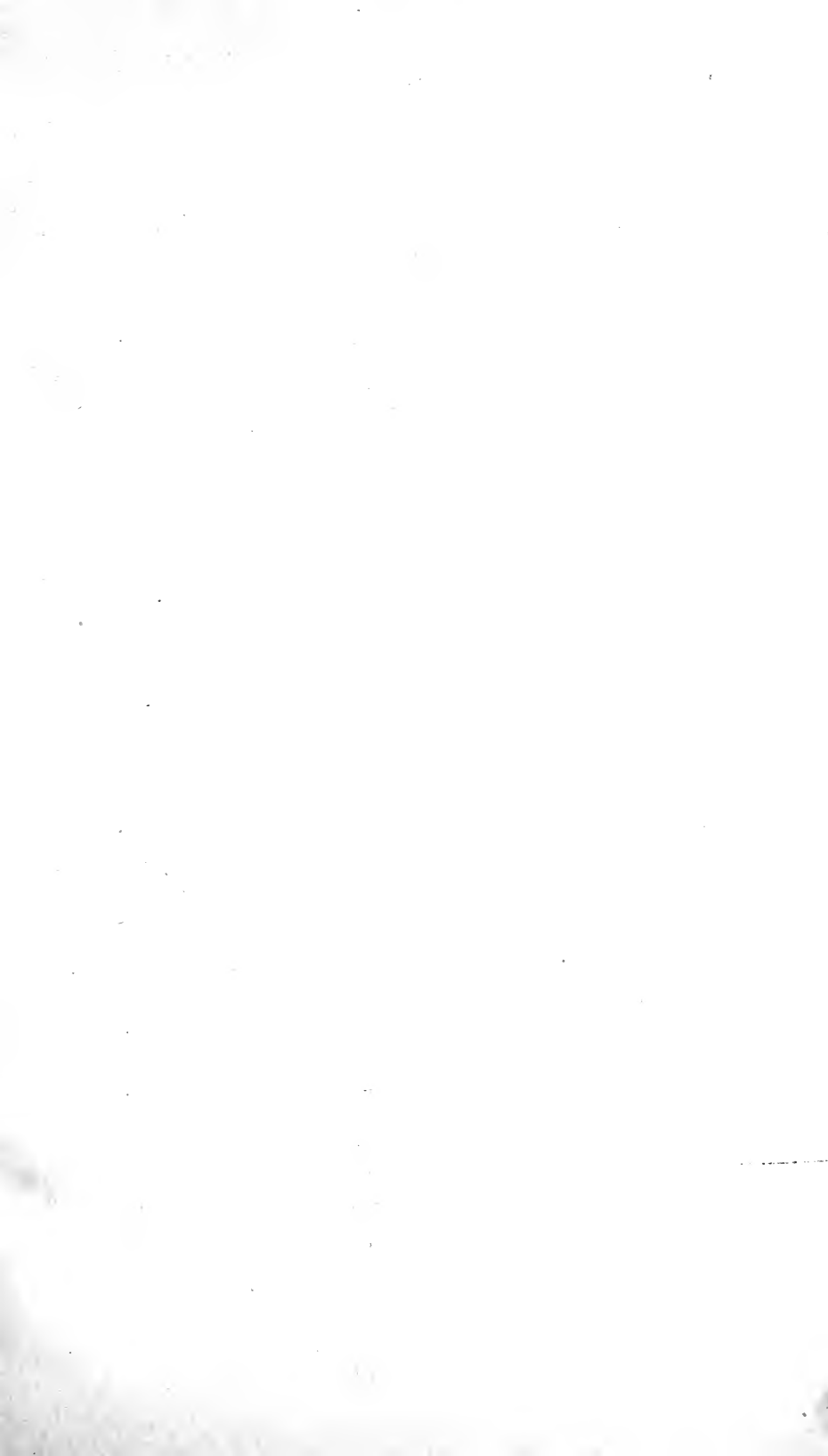
1900





The Playwright

His Partner's Wife
By Leonard Landes





Leonard Landes.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

A COMEDY

In Four Acts

By *LEONARD LANDES*

Author of "His Partner's Wife," and "Mr. Roch of Rochester"

Chambers Print, Publishers
24 New Chambers Street
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1900

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

DR. ROBERT MOCKART (*a practising physician in New York*).

MRS. FREDA MOCKART (*his mother*).

ETTA MOCKART (*his sister*).

MR. ADOLF MOELNER (*his uncle, a successful business man in New York*).

MISS LUCY MOELNER } (*daughters of Adolf Moelner*).

MISS LENA MOELNER }

PROF. WILLIAM POWERS (*a Professor of Literature at a New York university*).

MRS. GEORGETTE POWERS (*his wife*).

MISS EMILY POWERS (*his daughter*).

MR. JOHN LEE (*a literary friend of Robert Mockart*).

DR. LEWIS MANDEL } (*friends of Robert Mockart*).

MR. PAUL SCHAEFFER }

MR. DAN FULTON (*a prominent New York Manager*).

MARY } (*Servants in Prof. Powers' house*).

WILLIAM }

WEBSTER }

PHILLIPS }

DEAN }

BELMONT }

Newspaper Critics.

A leading man, a leading lady, members of Dan Fulton's stock company; messenger boy, etc., etc.

FIRST ACT.

AT MR. ROBERT MOCKART'S HOME, EAST SECOND STREET, NEW
YORK. SEPTEMBER.

SECOND ACT.

AT PROF. WILLIAM POWERS' HOME, MADISON AVE., NEW YORK.
OCTOBER.

THIRD ACT.

AT DR. MOCKART'S HOME. NOVEMBER.

FOURTH ACT.

ON THE STAGE OF A NEW YORK THEATRE. DECEMBER.

Period—1890.

The Playwright.

ACT FIRST.

The Scene represents a room in Doctor Mockart's house. The room is neatly furnished, indicating people in moderate circumstances. In the centre and left is a door, and on the right another door leading out to the study of Doctor Mockart. Both of these doors are furnished with portieres. In the centre of the room is a table, on the left there are chairs, and on the right of the room a sofa.

MR. MOELNER (*a short, stout, prosperous-appearing business man, quite corpulent, with iron-gray hair and white moustache, apparently about fifty-five years of age*), enters followed by

MRS. MOCKART, *the mother of the Doctor (a slim woman, with hair tinged with gray, about forty-seven to forty-nine years of age, appearance indicating a very nervous temperament)*. They enter at left door.

Mr. Moelner.

So—that is why you sent for me?

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Appealingly.*) For whom should I send? You know I have no one else to whom I can appeal—ask advice of—or speak my mind to. Robert does not listen to me; he does not see that he is doing injustice to us—and injury to himself—so I sent for you to speak to him—to explain, to show him his mistakes—where he is wrong. Perhaps he may take your advice and change.

Mr. Moelner.

Where is he now?

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Pointing with her finger to right door.*) There, there—studying unknown worlds, wasting his time on illusions and imaginary people—of no earthly use to himself, to us or to anybody. (*Turning to Moelner.*) Ah—is it not a pity for a young man for whom we have waited anxiously and patiently for so many years—we almost counted the days before he was graduated, and how hard we worked to help him finish his medical education; and afterwards, when we expected from him assistance—advice—and to be of some use to us—to himself—he takes such impossible, impracticable, foolish ideas into his head—to become a dramatist, a playwright—a poet.

Mr. Moelner.

But he has written so many things. What has become of them?

Mrs. Mockart.

Nothing—absolutely nothing! Only the other day he sent one of his plays to a manager, who kept it for a long time, and we really thought that something would come of it. In the end Robert received a letter from the manager saying that the play was very cleverly written, but he was sorry he could not use it. By a mark which I had previously made in the bundle, we found that the manager had not even opened the manuscript.

Mr. Moelner.

And what did Robert say to that?

Mrs. Mockart.

He coolly said: “That does not show anything. I will write another play and send it to the same manager.”

Mr. Moelner.

(*Astonished.*) Impossible! You cannot call it ambition. The boy must be mad—madly ambitious.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Interrupting.*) Study and the theatre—the theatre and study—these are his life, he exclaimed. So, you see, he has lost entirely all interest in his profession, that cost him so many years of labor, and has undertaken a task that he is incompetent, incapable to accomplish. (*Appealingly.*) Is it not madness? Madness in the last degree?

Mr. Moelner.

(*Nodding his head.*) Pity! pity! pity! that a boy without vices, with a golden profession, with life and a brilliant career before him should be ruined by a nonsensical idea.

Mrs. Mockart.

The worst of it is this: lately, in the library, he met a Mr. Lee—a literary hack—who introduced him to a certain Professor Powers; and now, all that Robert thinks of or cares about is this literary hack and this professor. He imagines that this professor will discover in his writings an unknown talent, a genius, and through him he will become known—popular—and his writings famous.

Mr. Moelner.

Yes; youthful illusions. Sweet dreams of the young that never reach realization.

Mrs. Mockart.

Mr. Lee writes him: "You are the coming man," and the professor tells him: "You are a promising writer."

Mr. Moelner.

You ought to ask them where do all the promising writers go to?

Mrs. Mockart.

But you cannot ask them; you cannot talk to them. I do not know—haven't the slightest idea—how I shall get him out of this difficulty.

Mr. Moelner.

I believe that the only thing that would make him drop this nonsense and take an interest in his profession would be an increase of his practice.

Mrs. Mockart.

Yes; it is the only thing that will dispel his foolish ideas. But, as I told you before, the chances of success in his practice in this locality are very small. He needs a better neighborhood, where he can make friends—acquaintances—and, principally, he needs some one to encourage in him, to stimulate in him a love for his profession.

Mr. Moelner.

As bad an uncle as Robert considers me to be, I will open an

office for him near my house, as I promised you, that I and my friends will do all in our power to help him ; but, to tell the candid truth, I believe it will be of no use as long as there is no stimulus within himself.

Mrs. Mockart.

I admit that; but sometimes it is necessary to apply to a man a stimulus from without (*quickly*) besides, you don't understand me, (*in a different tone*) Albert, is it not often the case that though a man is a total failure alone—he wins success—through the aid of a woman?

Mr. Moelner.

(*Interrupts.*) Yes—many a man owes his success in life—to a woman.

Mrs. Mockart.

I mean, Robert needs the encouragement of a good and sensible woman.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Laughing.*) Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! But, a sensible woman is such a rare being.

Mrs. Mockart.

They are rare, but they do exist, and surely your daughter Lucy is good and sensible.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Inquiringly.*) My daughter Lucy?

Mrs. Mockart.

Lucy thinks a great deal of Robert, you have often remarked.

Mr. Moelner.

Yes, Freda. That was our plan, even before he was graduated, and I often told you so ; but after his graduation he never came near us, never listened to me, kept aloof from us all because I refused to consent that he should enter any other career than his profession. Now, look at the result. What has he accomplished? What has he to show for so many years of work? Nothing, actually nothing. I am not a millionaire, to give my daughter a private fortune ; even if I could, I would not do it—and we should like Lucy, if she does marry, to have, if not more at least as much as she has been accustomed to. I admit that he is clever, and perhaps talented, but from a practical standpoint, he has

nothing to show. Had he not wasted so many years for nothing, things would have been different.

Mrs. Mockart.

But, he has all the material in him that makes a man succeed : he needs only to be shown the way, and with your influence behind him it would not take him long to establish himself.

Mr. Moelner.

He has all the material, no doubt. The trouble is, he is so obstinate ; it is a question if he would listen.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Emphatically.*) Listen he must—and change he shall ! (*in a different tone*) and why should he not change—he will be in different society, different surroundings, and with the help of a woman like your Lucy, he cannot but change

Mr. Moelner.

For the present leave Lucy out. I don't say Yes or No. We will see how things shape themselves. Call Robert. Say I am here ; I want to speak to him.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Goes to Right door and calls*) Robert—Robert—

Robert.

(*From inside*) I am busy.

Mrs. Mockart.

Uncle Albert is here.

Robert.

(*Surprised.*) Uncle Albert ? Uncle Albert you say—? (*Robert enters right door.*)

(*ROBERT is a man about thirty—slightly, yet firmly built, with regular features, face pale, though not unhealthy. He has dark brown eyes and abundant hair, and beard brown in color, suggesting the artistic type rather than the medical man*)

Robert.

Uncle, this is a surprise. If I remember rightly you have never been in our home since we lived here. I thought you and your

family never ventured into this neighborhood, and why should you? Think what a different part of the city this is—the Foreign Quarter—the tenement district they call it. How far apart the people here are from the people who live in your locality—the same men and women—but like the inhabitants of two different worlds. Are you not afraid of the dangers of contamination and contagion in this foreign atmosphere, Uncle?

Mr. Moelner.

(*Quietly.*) I did not come here. Your mother sent for me.

Robert.

Oh, I see, she sent for you. No doubt, to tell you what a bad son I am, and to beg you to try to make something good out of this very, very bad son.

Mr. Moelner.

As far as I can see, she was not telling me any untruth. After so many years of work, I understand you have very little to show.

Robert.

If you mean from a financial standpoint, perhaps (*reflectively*) "Yes."

Mrs. Mockart.

In what other way can you measure a man's success?

Robert.

Ha! There are a good many other ways, mother. A man can be financially a failure, and yet a great success as a man.

Mrs. Mockart.

For such men I care very little. Their success is theoretical and not practical.

Mr. Moelner.

The fact remains, you did not succeed in this locality, and perhaps after all, it is not so much your fault; you have no friends or acquaintances around here to help you along, and, naturally, you were discouraged and neglected your profession, and, fascinated by your ideals, you became an enthusiast—a dreamer.

Robert.

Uncle, there is a certain satisfaction in dreaming.

Mrs. Mockart.

Dreaming is only dreaming after all, for when you dream, you do not live.

Mr. Moelner.

Robert, your mother is right. Leave dreaming to sleep—for we will sleep longer than we will live—and while we have life, let us live.

Robert.

You call me dreamer, but I am not a dreamer. I want to live, and give life to my ideals.

Mr. Moelner.

Leave your ideals to the future, for the present let us talk what you can do now, to live. Your mother proposes that I should take you up into my locality and open an office for you there. I will give you my moral and financial support, and I promise you it will not be long before you will be well established, if you only give up your nonsensical notions and attend to your profession.

Robert.

What do you mean?

Mr. Moelner.

I mean that you did not have the opportunity to succeed in this locality, so I offer to open an office for you in my neighborhood. My friends and I will use all our influence to help you along—if you promise me to give up your foolish ideas of making plays.

Robert.

(Emphatically.) No.

Mrs. Mockart.

(Surprised.) No?

Robert.

(Firmly and positively.) No. Never.

Mr. Moelner.

And why not?

Robert.

I am satisfied with what I am, with what I have, and where I am—

Mrs. Mockart.

You are very easily satisfied, indeed—for you have nothing—you are nothing.

Robert.

Now, uncle. If you are really sincere and want to do something for me, to help me along—something that I cannot and will not forget all my life; and besides, if you want to save me anxiety, worryment—and sleepless nights—for months—perhaps for years to come—lend me your assistance and I will find someone who will produce one of my plays.

Mr. Moelner.

Oh, no—I have no money to invest in experiments.

Robert.

Call it an experiment, if you like, but you will find out my writings are of some value.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Shakes his head and motions with his hand.*) Oh, no, I don't believe in experiments, they don't pay. They are unprofitable.

Robert.

(*Laughingly.*) Oh, I understand. If you were sure to make as much money out of my plays as you do out of buttons, you would produce them.

Mr. Moelner.

Why do not the people who know how to judge produce them?

Robert.

(*Crying out.*) They will, they will. It is only a question of time.

Mr. Moelner.

Time? There is a time when all men must die. When? is the question.

Robert.

(*Reflectively.*) Ah, yes. When? When, is a bitter question to answer, to the man who knows "come" it must—but when will it come?—is full of agony, suffering anxiety and torturing pain. But, uncle, the man who does not understand the word "pain," never knows what "pleasure" means.

Mr. Moelner.

I hope you will succeed, but your chances of success are very small indeed.

Robert.

The smaller the better. If a man is bigger than his chances, the chances must become greater—and the man greater still.

Mrs. Mockart.

But, to fight a man must have ammunition—and you have nothing—even your physical strength will give out under this pressure.

Robert.

The satisfaction of some day having my dream realized, will give me strength to stand anything—everything—even my own mother's reproaches—my family's enmity—my friends' laughter. Come what may, I know what I am capable of doing, and nothing will discourage me.

Mrs. Mockart.

It is simply ridiculous, among seventy million people, a young man—whom we may say is a foreigner in this country—is not acquainted among the people, not even having the language well, wants to write plays. A play is life—and you wish to write of people whose lives you know nothing of.

Robert.

I may not know them, but I see them and feel them in my soul.

Mr. Moelner.

Robert, you are an enthusiast and you speak like a dreamer. If you would spend as much energy and determination in your profession, you would be better off.

Robert.

Perhaps I would be better off, but I can do nothing else than do the work I love—to do.

Mr. Moelner.

To do the work you love to do is right, but do not attempt a task you are incapable of accomplishing.

Robert.

Whether I am capable remains to be seen; for the present I have only one way to go.

Mr. Moelner.

Go your way. No one objects to that; but first do your duty

and fulfil your obligations to your family—not to your family, if you like—but to the people who believed you, trusted you—and helped you out. A man can go according to his inclination if he can afford to, but you are actually indebted to your mother—your sister—yes, to yourself. After you have done your duty and fulfilled your obligations, then you can go your way and then only.

Robert.

I am doing the best service for my family, for myself and everybody else, when I do the work I love to do. I always make the necessities of life in some way or other. I do not deny that I have some obligations to my family, but as long as I am willing to fulfil them it does not matter when it comes; besides, I have some people who have interested themselves in me, and who knows, the time may be at hand and at hand very soon.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Sarcastically.*) You mean the professor again.

Robert.

Yes, the professor.

Mrs. Mockart.

And you have forgotten to mention your friend, the literary hack from the library.

Robert.

Yes; I have forgotten to mention my friend from the library—Mr. Lee.

Mr. Moelner.

And on these men you build your future?

Robert.

No; I build the future myself. They are only interested in the building of it.

Mrs. Mockart.

And may I ask if the professor's daughter is not also interested in this building?

Robert.

(*Interrupts sternly.*) Mother!

Mrs. Mockart.

The professor has a daughter; that is nothing to be ashamed of

Robert.

(In anger.) Mother!

Mrs. Mockart.

What have I said that is so terrible? I simply mentioned that the professor's daughter also takes an interest in the building of your future, as you put it.

Robert.

Mother, I see it gives you pleasure to pain me. If I could pay you back my obligations with my own blood, I would do so, for only that would satisfy you, and you would leave me alone. Uncle, good night. *(Exits right door.)*

Mrs. Mockart.

(Weeping.) I did not know that when my poor husband died, everything died with him. Yes; he is trying in every shape and manner to tear himself from us—everything he was accustomed to—everybody whom he knew seems no longer to be in his sphere. He thinks that he knows more than anybody, and *he* is more than anybody.

Mr. Moelner.

Patience, Freda, patience. All years do not pass in one day.

Mrs. Mockart.

Ah! You don't know. You cannot understand what it is to struggle year after year for the bare necessities of life, and you know well that I am not used to it. I did not have it in my father's house, and I knew nothing of it—until my poor husband died.

Mr. Moelner.

Patience, patience.

Mrs. Mockart.

(Bitterly.) I would be patient, and would be satisfied with anything, if that boy would only listen to me and not consider me his enemy.

Mr. Moelner.

He is suffering from the fever of enthusiasm. He will cool down in time and everything will be all right. *(In different tone.)* Freda, you never mentioned to me that the professor's daughter took an interest in Robert's future. *(A pause. Softly.)* Is she beautiful?

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Abruptly.*) She is not beautiful, nor even fair—although I have never seen her.

Mr. Moelner.

But he was so indignant when you mentioned her name.

Mrs. Mockart.

Naturally. They turn his head by telling him how clever he is — their flattery makes him think that they are in earnest. "These are the people who understand me" he says, "They know my value. They do not care for the mere material side of life, but for nobler, higher aims; and if through my writings, I have only succeeded in making them my friends, I have accomplished enough, I am satisfied"—and he plainly shows that he is simply infatuated with them.

Mr. Moelner.

So! So! The professor's daughter has interested him?

Mrs. Mockart.

Interested him? He does nothing but think of her.

Mr. Moelner.

So—Then it is not the professor he really means, but that gentleman's daughter?

Mrs. Mockart.

He does not know what he means, nor what he wants. This boy will drive me to an early grave. He has simply taken my whole life's work, torn it into pieces and thrown it into the fire!

Mr. Moelner.

Really, Freda, it is not so discouraging as you make it, and the best way is, do not oppose him; just let him have his way, and things will come out all right. I am sorry I did not know of what was going on here for the last few years; otherwise I should have tried to help you, but it is not yet too late; it is not yet too late. I will find a way by which we shall bring this boy gradually around to his senses.

Mrs. Mockart.

But you are such a busy man. We see you so seldom; I dare say you are almost a stranger. As for your family, they have

completely forgotten that my husband was, though only a step-brother to you, still your brother.

Mr. Moelner.

I promise you I will come oftener now, and the girls, too, will come and see you.

Mrs. Mockart.

The girls are most welcome; but I do wish that you would help me.

Mr. Moelner.

I will—I will. Come and see me some morning at my office and we will talk it over.

(Bell rings; enter at left door ETTA, a bright-appearing blonde girl of sixteen, daughter of MRS. MOCKART.)

Etta.

Still here, Uncle?

Mr. Moelner.

I am just going.

Etta.

Don't forget your promise—about the box of candy, and remember to bring down Lucy and Lena, as you said.

(Bell rings again.)

Mr. Moelner.

Well, good-by, Freda. Have patience. I have taken the matter in hand, and you know that whatever I take in hand I generally carry through. You may expect the girls to-morrow.

(MR. MOELNER exits, middle door, followed by ETTA, MRS. MOCKART exits left door. Room remains empty for a moment.)

(Reenter ETTA, followed by MR. LEE.)

(MR. LEE is a slender man of literary appearance, walking with a slight stoop, and wearing clothes which indicate a disregard for the dictates of fashion; he is apparently about fifty, and his hair is sprinkled with gray.)

Etta.

(Calling at right door.) Your friend, Mr. Lee is here.

Robert.

(Rushing in excitedly.) Hello, Mr. Lee. What news? What news?

Mr. Lee.

I have just come from Prof. Powers. He has read your play, and he may come to see you to-night.

Robert.

Yes? Is he favorably impressed with it?

Mr. Lee.

He did not express his opinion. But from his actions I could judge that he found something of value in it. Furthermore, he said: "Tell the doctor I will call and see him to-night to give him my opinion."

Robert.

The professor, you say, may call here to-night?

Mr. Lee.

Yes, the professor, and he said it, in the presence of his wife and daughter.

Robert.

And how did they like the play?

Mr. Lee.

I asked them, but they only smiled and said: "The professor will tell the doctor all about it himself."

Robert.

What did Miss Powers say?

Mr. Lee.

She did not want to commit herself, but, like a clever woman, she let me into a secret, namely, that it was her intention to suggest to her father that in case you should not succeed in finding a manager for your play, to give an evening at home and invite a few friends—managers and prominent newspaper critics, and have you read it before them; thus, perhaps, through the newspapers, the play may secure a partial but immediate recognition.

Robert.

That is not like all "clever" women, but a good suggestion from a *very clever* woman.

Mr. Lee.

Ah, oh, yes. (*Changing his tone.*) A very clever woman

indeed. (*A pause.*) But Robert, your intonation leads me to understand, that you meant to say, not only "she is clever, but a beauty, an angel, a goddess."

Robert.

She is one indeed—A fair goddess.

Mr. Lee.

Why, Robert, I am astonished. (*In a changed tone.*) You don't mean to say that you are in love.

Robert.

What nonsense, Mr. Lee—What nonsense.

Mr. Lee.

But you talk that way.

Robert.

No, her presence simply inspires me. You told me yourself that every movement of hers expressed loveliness; that her voice sounded like the most harmonious music. I am not in love, but *she* is love itself, and truly, she is an ideal—my ideal of a woman.

Mr. Lee.

Yes, she is fair and lovely, and a thousand times more than you say, but that is dangerous ground for you to tread upon. You must avoid such things for the present. You have something to accomplish—to work at—and success requires unceasing work.

Robert.

Why, Mr. Lee, the day I see her the most beautiful thoughts come to me, and that very day I do twice as much work.

Mr. Lee.

I am beginning to regret that I introduced you to the professor. You don't intend to repay us for all our trouble by stealing his daughter?

Robert.

No, Mr. Lee; I might be foolish, but I don't think that I am ungrateful.

Mr. Lee.

Please understand me, Robert; I don't mean that you do not deserve the professor's daughter, but I fear for the success of your future work.

Robert.

(*Emphatically.*) My life is my work, and my work is my life.

Mr. Lee.

That I thought at one time myself. I will tell you something that occurred in my life that I never told any one before. During my younger years I undertook a literary work which I considered would be the work of my life. While I was engaged in this work, I met a woman whom I considered the embodiment of my ideal. I was infatuated, I was enchanted, I was inspired with her manner and her presence; her movements charmed me, her glance bewildered me, her voice delighted me. I thought I had met some one who would share the humble and simple life I intended to pass in this world; but after a time my ideal began to fade and vanished away. She belonged to a different world. To my despair and disappointment my whole inspiration and courage for my work disappeared. You may call it superstition, but I tell you this because I fear lest you should meet the same fate.

Robert.

Oh, no! It is nothing but superstition on your part, Mr. Lee. That cannot and will not happen in my case.

Mr. Lee.

And why not? Are you so different from other men?

Robert.

No, not that; but I look at the meaning of the word ideal from a different standpoint than you. What is an ideal, I ask? An illusion, a conception of our imagination, that we see and give life to in our dreams; and this creation of our fancy by some chance suddenly and unexpectedly appears before our eyes in real flesh and blood. Naturally we are enchanted when we meet—as we think—this real embodiment of the lovely vision of our imagination, and painfully disappointed and despairing when we find that it has shown itself only to fade and vanish away. (*Change of tone.*) Did it ever happen to you, Mr. Lee, to wake up after a dream that was full of beauty, delight and magnificence to find to your disappointment that it was not reality, but only a vision of your sleep? Now, should you, because this dream is not real, give way to disappointment and despair? or, rather, say to yourself:

"If I live and wait, I may yet realize this beautiful hope ; if I give up to despair, I shall realize nothing." Now, see, Mr. Lee, you wrecked your life for a disappointment.

Mr. Lee.

Ah ! it is not so easy in life to conquer our disappointments, and a man is a very happy man who can do it.

Robert.

By effort we can do more than we think.—As long as I have known you, Mr. Lee, I have felt that some great disappointment has passed through your life.—Would it not have been better if you had made the effort to forget your loss, and have tried to conquer a new field ?

Mr. Lee.

(*Regretfully.*) It would have been better—I often regretted that I did not try ;—but now, it is too late, it is too late.—My best years have passed, the spirit of my life has burnt out—(*bell rings again*) I see you will be busy, I will go.—

Robert.

Wait a minute, wait a minute, we shall see first who it is.

Mr. Lee.

Come down and see me in the library, you have not been there for some time ; there are some new and very interesting things for you.—A new poetic drama by Hauptmann—there is Rostand's play, a new play by Ibsen and Sudermann, and a new comedy by Maeterlink.

Robert.

So, so, Maeterlink has written a comedy, this is interesting.

Mr. Lee.

Besides, it is very cleverly written too, and on different lines—he has dropped the allegorical and followed more the realistic school.

(*Enter Etta, centre door.*)

Etta.

Robert, your friends Dr. Mandel and Mr. Schaeffer are here.

Mr. Lee.

Well, I'll better go.

Robert.

You know them, you met my friends Dr. Mandel and Mr.

Schaeffer before; don't you remember how you criticized them, "that the one had more money than brains, and the other more education than common sense?" (*They both laugh.*)

Mr. Lee.

Yes, yes, I remember.

(*Enter Dr. Mandel and Mr. Schaeffer.*)

Dr. Mandel.

Ah! you are at home.

Mr. Schaeffer.

What do you expect—a man who aspires some day to be a Sardou—a Sudermann—or a Shakespeare, would be anything *but* at home?

Dr. Mandel.

Robert, we came here to take you out to dinner, and have an important proposition to make to you.

Mr. Lee.

(*About to retire.*) Perhaps it is private?

Dr. Mandel.

No! Mr. Lee, there is nothing private. On the contrary, I am glad that we found you here.

Robert.

Mandel, I am sorry, I cannot go with you to dinner, although I would no doubt enjoy it, but would be happy to hear your proposition.

Schaeffer.

Oh, no! If you cannot go to dinner with us—we will make no proposition.

Dr. Mandel.

Now be still—be quiet. The proposition is mine, the invitation to dinner is yours.

Robert.

So! It is Schaeffer's invitation to dinner. Schaeffer, you seem very anxious to blow in all the money your father left you.

Schaeffer.

You see, I must make up for my father's economy, and therefore I practice *dis-economy*.

Mr. Lee.

It's a very good way of getting even with a foolish father.

Robert.

What is the proposition, Mandel?

Dr. Mandel.

You know, that a wave of political reform will pass over our city at this coming election, and the general committee of this movement has requested our district to send in some name that would be desirable to nominate for our assembly district.

Robert.

And you intend to propose my name? Of course!

Schaeffer.

Certainly, and why not? Even I, Schaeffer, indorse the plan!

Robert.

I thank you for the honor you offer me, but the task I am at present engaged in, makes it impossible for me to accept.

Schaeffer.

Ha! Ha! Ha! He cannot accept! Really, he cannot accept! How do you expect a man who aspires to be some day a playwright, a dramatist, a poet, to stoop to political office? No! No! No! Why, Mandel, he may consider it an insult. The great man he expects some day to be.

Dr. Mandel.

Robert, it is not only a nomination, but this year it means sure election.

Robert.

It makes no difference. First of all I am not a reformer, at least not a political reformer, and truly I don't care to enter such a career, I have outlined a work for my life, and it is the only one I can devote myself to. Not to be partial, if I had any voice in the matter, I would suggest your name, Mandel.

Schaeffer.

It is not a bad suggestion, Robert. Mandel could very well use the salary, if not the office. He had two patients in his office

to-day. One brought him a bill—the other wanted to sell him some books. (*They all laugh.*)

Dr. Mandel.

(*To Mr. Lee.*) What do you think, Mr. Lee? Is he not wrong in not accepting this offer? For this is an assured thing, while the success of his writings is only a possibility.

Mr. Lee.

A man cannot do two things at the same time and do them right. In my opinion the success of his writings is not a possibility—but a certainty.

Dr. Mandel.

A certainty? Indeed! And here we laugh, joke and make fun of him and his aspirations; and who can tell? Some morning we may wake up and find our friend Robert famous, renowned and all the critics may say: "Last night a new play was produced by a new author, and those who say there is nothing new in dramatic life found out last night they were mistaken, for new blood and a new generation bring forth new ideas. It was original in imagination and execution—it was a success, a triumph—and we are happy that such a young man was discovered, and most happy to help him and to encourage him to future efforts."

Mr. Lee.

(*Shaking Robert's hand.*) I hope, Robert, I may live to see Mandel's prophecy fulfilled!

Schaeffer.

Mandel's prophecy is rather too partial, gentlemen. The disappointment will be too great if the play should prove a failure. I hope it will not be so; but it is also possible that the papers may say: "A new play was produced, and truly by a new man, but with old ideas and with other people's thoughts. No imagination and no execution. We admit that the young man has some talent, but 5 per cent. of talent and 95 per cent. of water, makes watery talent, but no play. It was neither dramatic nor tragic, but a mixture of nonsense and talk. It was neither funny nor farcical, but a complete failure. The audience laughed where they should have wept, and wept where they should have laughed. It was a new play by a new man, but there was nothing new in the play, and surely nothing new in the man."

Robert.

Yes, Schaeffer, you are right. It is more likely they will punish me than praise me, for most of us prefer to give others pain rather than pleasure.

Dr. Mandel.

Don't mind what Schaeffer says, Robert—he generally speaks rubbish. Besides, the critics themselves sometimes say one thing, and the people just the other, but, at any rate, we all hope to see your play produced. Won't it be a treat to hear the people applaud, their interest, and their enthusiasm aroused. Why, even now I can hear them cry out: "Author! Author! Speech! Speech!" And then flowers, roses thrown at you. Who knows, who can tell. It is possible, yes probable, that even yet we may witness such a grand night.

Schaeffer.

(*Laughing.*) It is possible, but hardly probable. What foolishness can dwell in man's imagination, Mandel! However, if our imaginations were as disappointing as our realizations, there would be mighty little happiness left for us. So, Mandel, I enjoy the success you predict for Robert, even though Robert himself would be satisfied with less than flowers and roses, and would be happy if they threw nothing else at him. As for applause, they may flatter him, they may cry out: "Author! Author!" But speech, no, no! Speech, no, no!

Mr. Lee.

Do not flatter yourself, Mr. Schaeffer, you will never be honored by the flattery of applause or by shouts to speak.

Robert.

Don't take it seriously, Mr. Lee, you know he is only joking.

Schaeffer.

A joke oftentimes becomes a reality.

Dr. Mandel.

Never mind! In spite of everything, Robert will yet be pointed out: "There goes a clever man; he struggled, suffered, but he won. Bravo! Bravo! That is a man and a writer!"

Schaeffer.

O, yes! He is a writer. But he writes something that is beyond his powers, and no one can understand him, except himself. He is ambitious. We admire his courage, but, after all, he is only a fool.

Dr. Mandel.

Come, now, we have wasted too much time. Mr. Lee, Robert, come with us to dinner, and we will discuss the matter further.

Robert.

Really, I cannot go, but take Mr. Lee with you.

Mr. Lee.

I will go with them in order that you may get rid of them.

Schaeffer.

Now, come, Robert, you must come along.

Robert.

I would be only too glad to go, but I expect somebody.

Schaeffer.

Ha! ha! He expects somebody. Really, did you ever hear of such a thing? A poet actually expecting somebody. What is it—a he—or a she?

Robert.

A he.

Schaeffer.

Important?

Robert.

Very.

Mandel.

About your play?

Robert.

Yes.

Mandel.

Come, let us go, Mr. Lee. And you, Schaeffer.

Schaeffer.

So, really you cannot go? You cannot go because you will not go, and you will not go because you cannot go. How is that for dialogue, old chap? You might use it in one of your plays

Isn't that brilliant? Ha! ha! Who can tell? Some day, some day. We are going—going—gone! Ha! ha! Come, Mandel, come, Mr. Lee.

(MRS. MOCKART *enters left door, unnoticed by the others, and remains standing by the door.*)

Dr. Mandel.

Come, Mr. Lee.

Dr. Mandel and Schaeffer.

(*Together at door.*) Good-by! Good afternoon! Good evening! Who can tell? Some day we may see—we may hear—of your popularity. Fame — flowers — roses — applause — success — speech—or speech not. Ha! ha! ha!

Mr. Lee.

You are two fools—and some day you will be two idiots.

Schaeffer.

(*Surprised.*) What? Yes, yes; you're right. Ha! ha! Some day.

(SCHAEFFER, MANDEL and LEE *exit centre door.*)

Mrs. Mockart.

(*After a long silence.*) Was I not right when I told you that your own friends laughed at you and your foolish work?

Robert.

(*Laughing it off.*) Ah, they're only joking.

Mrs. Mockart.

Their jokes were *too* funny—to be jokes.

Robert.

You don't know them, mother; they were only making fun. Besides, what do I care what they say? They don't know anything about such things, and don't amount to much when they want to judge me as a writer. The man who does know did not laugh.

Mrs. Mockart.

You mean Mr. Lee, of course.

Robert.

Yes, certainly. He *knows*.

Mrs. Mockart.

Yes, he knows. But you call Mr. Lee a man? Why, he hasn't even a pair of shoes.

Robert.

That makes no difference. But he knows—he can judge.

Mrs. Mockart.

Of course, he knows. But see what his knowledge brought him to. He was so fond of his companionable books that he fell asleep among them, and I fear that the same thing will happen to you, that you will dream and dream and live in your illusionary world, till finally you wake up some morning and find your best years gone.

Robert.

Oh, well, you fear a good many things, and, strange to say, you always associate me with failure; never with success. You never see anything good in me—only my faults and failures.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Sarcastically.*) You mean I must not class you with Mr. Lee, for you not only take in the knowledge of others, but you are an *inventor*—a *creator* of *new* ideas, as you put it.

(*Bell is heard ringing, ETTA enters left door, out of breath.*)

Etta.

Mother, there is a carriage at the door!

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Surprised.*) A carriage?

Robert.

(*Turns on all the lights.*) It must be the professor.

Etta.

No, I saw from the window. There are two ladies.

Robert.

(*To ETTA.*) Two ladies? No one else?

Etta.

That's all I have seen.

(*Bell rings again.*)

Robert.

Why don't you open the door, Etta?

(ETTA, *confused*, runs first to left door, then to right, and finally exits centre door.)

Mrs. Mockart.

Who can it be? Is it possible Uncle Moelner has returned with his family?

Robert.

It is more likely that it is the Professor with his wife and daughter.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*In surprise.*) The Professor! His wife and daughter! To see you!

Robert.

Yes, to see me. The professor has read my play and they have all come along to let me know their opinion.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Sarcastically.*) A good excuse—a fine idea. Clever—very clever indeed.

(*Exits left door.*)

MRS. POWERS and DAUGHTER enter at centre door. MRS.

POWERS is short, stout and middle aged, hair is sprinkled with gray, has regular features and refined bearing.

MISS POWERS is rather tall, of fine erect figure, oval face, blond and about twenty-two or three.)

Mrs. Powers.

(*Offering her hands.*) How do you do, Doctor?

Robert.

Very well indeed, thank you.

Miss Powers.

How are you, Doctor Mockart?

(*They shake hands in a very friendly manner.*)

Robert.

I am quite well. (*Pointing to chairs.*) Won't you be seated?

(*They take seats.*)

Robert.

Is the Professor coming?

Mrs. Powers.

No.

Robert.

(Disappointed.) No?—He is coming later?

Mrs. Powers.

No, I am sorry to say. A special meeting of the trustees of the college was called, and he was obliged to attend; but as he promised to call on you to-night and give you his opinion of your play, he has sent us instead.

Robert.

And I am impatiently waiting to hear his verdict.

Mrs. Powers.

It is more than favorable.

Robert.

(Hopefully.) Yes?

Mrs. Powers.

The Professor followed your play with great interest from scene to scene—from act to act, while Emily was reading it to him.

(ROBERT turns with a smile of delight to MISS POWERS.)

Miss Powers.

It gave me as much pleasure to read it, as papa to listen.

Mrs. Powers.

He was unrestrained in the expression of his admiration for the play.

Robert.

(Overjoyed.) Indeed?

Miss Powers.

He praised the originality of the idea—the skill of execution, the cleverness of the dialogue. In short, he predicted for the author a great future.

Robert.

(Aside. In ecstasy.) This is the first ray of light, the first encouragement after many a day of gloom and despair; this is balm on my wounded feelings, inflicted by ignorance and avarice.

(*To MRS. POWERS.*) This encouragement is unexpected; it is as welcome—as it is valuable.

Miss Powers.

We all firmly believe in your ultimate success, and I am convinced that possible reverses at the beginning will only serve to strengthen your perseverance, and will not in the least affect your iron will and indomitable courage.

Robert.

Yes, indeed, if five of my plays were total failures one after the other, that would not in the least discourage me to continue writing the sixth, twelfth and even the thirteenth, if necessary.

Miss Powers.

We hope that will not be the case. You know, Doctor, managers are generally very superstitious, and I doubt whether if a man wrote twelve failures, they would care to try the thirteenth.

Robert.

I am not a genius, Mrs. Powers, but the more I write I think the better I write; and if I keep at it, the managers will be forced some day to listen to me, to recognize me.

Miss Powers.

I have always been wondering how one mind can be productive of so many different ideas. Where do you get the material for so many plays?

Robert.

They come naturally, of themselves. I read or hear of a simple incident which impresses me; this impression in time begins to develop into ideas in my imagination, characters spring up of themselves, a plot begins to form and all this finally shapes itself into a drama.

Miss Powers.

A mere incident?

Robert.

Why, a mere sentence. The play which I have submitted to the Professor had its origin from a few head lines that I saw in a newspaper. I read: "*An innocent man condemned.*" This simple sentence brought a picture before my eyes. I could see a man with a bended head, on his knees, with the earth below him

and the sky above him ; I could hear him weeping and crying out "I am innocent ! I am innocent !" in a tone that was so sad that it was heard in every corner of the world. The central opposing forces of the play were conceived when I read that this man's condemnation was brought about by the fraud, forgery and falsehood of his own military comrades and teachers.

Mrs. Powers.

You built your drama then on the mere facts you read ?

Robert.

Yes, but the facts are only the model for my canvas, the workmanship is the invention of my own imagination. For example, in one of his trial scenes, the accused sees and feels that no matter what evidence is brought before his judges, their minds are made up to condemn him ; that they laugh at his patriotism and sincerity, and call them mere schemes and shamming. In an outburst of passion that thrilled even the atmosphere of the court room, he cried out : " Gentlemen, I am a soldier, if you doubt my sincerity and patriotism as such, put me to the test. Send me for the benefit of my country on an errand where there is sure and certain death, and see if I will not cheerfully give my life if my country demands it. I want to die as a soldier and not be executed as a traitor ! " But to all his appeals they said it was mere argument, not facts—and condemned him. All these things began and developed from a few suggestive sentences that I read in a newspaper.

Miss Powers.

Wonderful ! And you say that you have never had any stage experience.

Robert.

Never.

Mrs. Powers.

It is a natural gift, that cannot be learned on the stage or behind the curtain. It is born with the man.

Miss Powers.

Oh ! What a pity it would be if you should fail in getting recognition.

Robert.

I shall not fail.

Mrs. Powers.

Now, let us come back to our original conversation. The Professor's idea is that before you give a manager your play to read, he will invite a few critics, some managers, a few literary men and some personal friends, to our usual "at home," and have you read the play to them, and possibly your work may interest some manager present and so lead to its production.

Robert.

Yes; the Professor is right. To ask a manager to read a play by an unknown writer is an invitation to torture.

Mrs. Powers.

So you agree to this proposition?

Robert.

I agree to anything that the Professor suggests.

Mrs. Powers.

Then let us hope that the plan will prove a success.

Mrs. and Miss Powers.

(*Together.*) Yes, let us hope.

Mrs. Powers.

(*Aside, to her daughter.*) Emily, it is late.

Miss Powers.

Yes, Mamma. (*They bid ROBERT good-night and go to the centre door. MRS. POWERS passes out, but MISS POWERS remains inside after her mother has gone. Cordially shaking hands again with ROBERT.*) Good-night, and I hope to see you soon again. This will remain a memorable evening, for an important step has been decided upon that may be decisive of your future, and I feel happy that I have been in a way—though insignificant—instrumental in bringing about this result.

Robert.

(*In a tone of exultation.*) My future is now assured, for no more shall I feel that I am alone. Heretofore I was like a child in a crowd, who, full of anxiety, is looking for a lost parent. Tortured by fear she watches every passer-by, only to be racked

with disappointment. At last the parent suddenly appears. A glance, a look, and all again is joy and happiness. So I have found the parent; in the relentless, merciless crowd the Professor's kind sympathy and interest shall henceforth be my anchor of hope—his judgment my guiding star on the long road that is still before me. Forward now, with renewed zeal and vigor, I must surely in the end reach the goal of my ambition.

Miss Powers.

Yes; I have often dreamt of the possibilities of your future, of that one night's success that will turn all your anxiety into joy and will bring peace to your soul and happiness to your mind. Your name will be on everybody's lips—your fame will spread like wildfire—and the applause of the multitude will re-echo in the heart that will rejoice over your achievements. May that moment be near for you—for us. (*Shakes his hand again.*) Good-night.

(*Exits centre door.*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT SECOND.

Reception room in PROFESSOR POWERS' New York house. Room is tastefully furnished and brightly illuminated. In the back of the room, two large book cases. Folding doors on the left, opening into a further room. On the right side hangs a painting of the Professor, also a companion picture of his daughter when very young. Another door on the right. In right back corner, a large table with punch-bowl, glasses, refreshments, etc. In the left back corner, a piano. As the curtain rises, first loud laughter, then applause is heard. WILLIAM and HANNAH, two servants of PROFESSOR POWERS are seen peeping in on the left.

William.

(*Pointing with finger.*) Hannah—who is that man with the long hair, sitting in the right hand corner?

Hannah.

Why that is the great critic—Webster.

William.

He looks as if he needed a haircut. Who is that tall slim man sitting near him?

Hannah.

That is the great German critic, Phillips.

William.

He looks as if he had had nothing to eat for a year and was dying of starvation.

Hannah.

William, see how attentive Miss Emily is to the reader. She is swallowing every word he says.

William.

Yes ; I heard the Professor remark at dinner to-day : “ What a

fine young fellow Dr. Mockart is. He'll be heard of some day." What is he reading? A play; his own play?

Hannah.

Of course, his own play. It cannot be somebody else's play.

William.

That he reads it, does not show it is his own.

Hannah.

Mind your own business.

*(Applause is heard, coming from the room to the left.
WILLIAM applauds.)*

Hannah.

William—what are you doing, William?

William.

Applauding. I am supposed to be an usher—and ushers must always applaud—that's what they are in a theatre for.

Hannah.

Hush—Hu-sh-sh! Mrs. Powers is coming. *(Runs over to table and begins to straighten and arrange glasses.)* William—be quick—they are coming.

(Loud laughter—prolonged applause—and cries of Good—good—heard from the adjoining room.)

*(Enter from left WEBSTER, PHILLIPS, DEAN and BELMONT)
(WEBSTER is short and stout, with long white hair and beard.)*

(PHILLIPS is a tall slim man, with bald head and what hair remains is quite long.)

(DEAN short, about thirty-five, slightly bald, with a limp, wears eyeglasses.)

(BELMONT is smooth-faced, except the moustache; hair sprinkled with gray.)

(PHILLIPS enters with WEBSTER, the others following.)

Phillips.

(As he enters, nodding his head.) What do you think of the play, Webster?

Webster.

It is very clever. Of course there are a good many things for the young man yet to learn, but as a whole it is pretty good—very good for a beginner.

Phillips.

It is a question if Tom, Dick and Harry will like such a play.

Webster.

For that I care very little. I like it. There is something novel about it that refreshes the mind.

Dean.

There is something that this young man has brought out that I have never seen in any other American play. In it he has amalgamated our foreign and native elements into one substance—and shown us as a nation.

Webster.

And how neatly he has done it—and yet so naturally.

Phillips.

Yes; it is clever, neat and natural—but you can see that it is written by the hand of a novice.

Belmont.

Yes, and a novice who has only combined plays he has seen, into his own drama.

Phillips.

(*To Belmont.*) Belmont, who is this Mockart, anyway? What is he? I never heard of him before.

Belmont.

(*Shrugs shoulders.*) Oh, some young physician, who from lack of patients and patience took, I suppose, to play writing.

Dean.

Belmont—there you are very much mistaken. This young man has not “just taken a notion to write a play,” but it has cost him a great many years of conscientious work, and it is not lack of professional practice, but his great love of the drama which led him to write—and that will surely give him success.

Webster.

Now, gentlemen, it makes no difference who he is—what he is or where he comes from. WE must not consider whether he has virtues or vices, but only judge him as a writer, and as such he deserves a hearing and encouragement.

Belmont.

But still, I would not care to take the responsibility of advising a manager to produce this play.

Webster.

(*Sarcastically.*) Don't fear, Belmont. The manager would not take your advice anyway.

(PROF. POWERS, *a good-natured looking man, about 55 years of age, with gray side whiskers, tall and well built, and with an elastic, energetic walk, enters at the left door.*

Prof. Powers.

Well, gentlemen, what do you think of the play?

Phillips.

(*Shrugging.*) It's pretty good, but it might be better.

Webster.

I think it is very good.

Dean.

Yes, and original.

Belmont.

There is nothing new in it.

Prof. Powers.

However that may be, you must admit that it is written in a novel way, and, besides, it deals with healthy matter. He hasn't taken as a subject a woman with a past—or a man with a future—and the characters he describes are not so good that they could be found only in heaven, or so bad that they could exist only in hell (*pointing downward*) but they are human, and we meet them every day in flesh and blood—and only a man with great love for his fellowmen could describe such characters. (MR. LEE *enters, left.*) Mr. Lee, some of the gentlemen think that Mockart's play is not original.

Mr. Lee.

No!—no!—I have seen the way that the writer worked up this play—step by step, and not only that, I know how the subject of the work suggested itself to him. One night we went together to see a German play which dealt with the struggles of an unknown composer, and he thought that it would be a good scheme to describe his own struggles as a dramatist.

(Enter ROBERT, and MR. FULTON, a theatrical manager.)

(MR. FULTON is a tall, slim man with beard and bald head, about forty years of age, and of refined appearance, and walks with erect carriage; as they enter at left door, the critics walk over to them and congratulate Robert.)

Phillips.

(With enthusiasm.) I congratulate you, Mr. Mockart. *(Very suavely.)* I hope that it will not be long before I may have the pleasure of seeing your play from an orchestra chair.

Robert.

Thank You.

(PHILLIPS joins MR. FULTON on the right, and the other critics form a group around ROBERT in the centre.)

Mr. Fulton.

(To Phillips.) I think this a work that will take, and with proper management, it will be a money-maker. Of course you cannot tell. Most of the successes that came under my hands I did not think much of as manuscripts, and some of the manuscripts that I was enthusiastic over and had the greatest confidence in proved utter failures.

Phillips.

The play reads well, but, as you said, a good one may read badly and a bad one may read well; from reading alone you cannot tell.

Mr. Fulton.

And from playing you cannot tell. It depends upon the temperament *(jocularly)*, temperature and taste of the public.

Webster.

No—no. It is all right, even from a financial standpoint. It is

written in an enthusiastic manner, and he has—unconsciously—shown that he already knows the tricks of the trade.

(WEBSTER, ROBERT, the MANAGER and PHILLIPS join the group in the centre.)

Webster.

Have you any particular method of working, Mr. Mockart?

Robert.

No. I sometimes carry the material for a play for years, and the best ideas will suggest themselves to me just in a moment. At other times takes weeks and months. The characters that I have portrayed in this play—their manner and behavior—were suggested to me by an At Home to which I was invited. I met there the principal characters I describe.

(MRS. POWERS and her daughter enter, followed by guests.)

Mrs. Powers.

Gentlemen, won't you have some punch?

(As the servants serve the lunch, the lady visitors surround MR. MOCKART congratulating him.)

First Lady.

It was delightful.

Second Lady.

It was just lovely. I am longing to see it played.

Third Lady.

It was charming.

Fourth Lady.

Really, your play was most enjoyable, Mr. Mockart.

Miss Powers.

(*Aside, to her mother.*) Wasn't it grand? Isn't he talented? His reading is just as fine as his writing.

Mrs. Powers.

Yes, dear; he is undoubtedly a gifted man.

Miss Powers.

Might we not now, before the people start to leave, ask Mr. Mills to sing my song and Mrs. Janeux to accompany him.

Mrs. Powers.

Certainly. (*To MR. MILLS*) Mr. Mills won't you favor us? (*To MRS. JANEUX.*) Mrs. Janeux, I know, will accompany you. (*MR. MILLS and MRS. JANEUX go to the piano.*) Friends, Mr. Mills is going to sing a modest effort of my daughter's, in honor of the "Playwright," entitled "Success," and Mrs. Janeux has kindly consented to accompany him.

(*Guests applaud. After the music the guests applaud, and they all rise and begin leaving. As they pass out a DOWAGER says to ROBERT—*)

Dowager.

Now, Mr. Mockart, don't forget. I expect you at my At Home next Tuesday, and you will meet there people from our oldest and (*in confiding tone*) wealthiest families.

Robert.

Delighted, I am sure. (*Laughingly.*) But, you know, I possess neither blue blood, nor red millions.

Dowager.

That makes no difference. You will be all the more welcome.

A Lady.

(*To ROBERT.*) And don't fail, Mr. Mockart, to honor us with your presence at our "Tea" next Wednesday.

Robert.

I shall be present—circumstances permitting—although I am not much of a tea-drinker.

Lady.

Don't mind the tea. There will be more time given to gossip than tea.

(*Exeunt guests, followed by MISS POWERS, right door. The critics also prepare to leave; as they do so, MRS. POWERS says to the professor, aside.*)

Mrs. Powers.

(*To PROF. POWERS*) Mr. Fulton appears to be interested in the play. Why not take him and Mr. Lee into the dining-room

and I will serve a little lunch, and then you can talk it over privately.

Robert.

(*To the critics, as they go out.*) Gentlemen: I bid you all good night. Whenever you speak of my play, speak of it as it is. I shall try next time to do better. You will overlook my anxiety, for you know better than anyone else how much labor there is in such a work as this, and you will pardon me, I am sure, for hoping you may (*laughing*)—"Let me down easy"—as the politicians say (*All laugh.*)

Critics.

(*All.*) Good night. (*Exeunt right door.*)

PROFESSOR POWERS, MR. FULTON and MR. LEE *exeunt left door followed by* MRS. POWERS. *As they do so* MOCK-ART *finding himself alone, goes over and stands looking at* MISS POWERS' *portrait.* MISS POWERS *re-enters right door.*

Miss Powers.

Would you recognize me in that picture?

Robert.

(*Nodding.*) Hum-um. Yes, that is just why I am looking at it.

Miss Powers.

It was a present from my aunt on my tenth birthday.

Robert.

It bears a strong resemblance.

Miss Powers.

Do you think so? (*A moment of silence.*) But to change the subject, Doctor; from the enthusiastic good night that the critics bade me at the door, I am certain they feel favorably disposed toward you.

Robert.

It matters not, Miss Powers. Their praise will not spoil me, any more than their condemnation will discourage me; whether I have succeeded or failed to-night, the appreciation of yourself and your father is sufficient reward.

Miss Powers.

Now, it occurred to me—of course, I don't know, and it may be that I am wrong—but, the most essential thing in modern plays is love—is it not? (*Laughingly.*) Of course, perhaps you may not believe in it, but it seems to me that you have not made it a sufficiently prominent factor in your play.

Robert.

Why, Miss Powers. I tried to infuse love not only into my play—but into every sentence—for that which is without love, man dislikes; neither can the world exist without it—but it all depends upon what you mean by love. There is the love to do right—love for your fellow-men—love for companionship—and love for love's sake.

Miss Powers.

Yes, there are a thousand different kinds of love, I suppose; but what I mean is—"true love."

Robert.

True love? There must be truth in every love; otherwise, it is not love. But perhaps what you mean by true love, is the love between man and woman.

Miss Powers.

(*Quickly.*) Then you believe in that?

Robert.

And why not?

Miss Powers.

I thought poets are so different from other men.

Robert.

But they are men—and man is man—all the time—and every time.

Miss Powers.

(*Laughingly.*) So—then you believe in love.

Robert.

Yes.—In the full sense of the word, I do. But that is only the great love of companionship—and for love's sake—and since I have known you, I begin to believe that the greatest love in the world is that—particular kind of love.

Miss Powers.

Yes?

Robert.

Yes, my love for you.

Miss Powers.

(*Blushing.*) For me?

Robert.

For you—the guardian angel of my hope and ambition—for you, whose noble and pure heart has ever inspired me with courage, enthusiasm and faith in the work that I have undertaken (*caressingly*) For you—and You alone.

Miss Powers.

(*Feelingly.*) Who would not glory in the possession of your noble heart—who could withstand the charm of your intellect—the influence of your powerful mind—the beauty of your ideals—but, no, no, you must not think of that—that would be premature.

Robert.

Why?

Miss Powers.

Why? Because I am afraid it may interfere with your life's ambition.

Robert.

There is no higher ambition for me than to be loved by you.

Miss Powers.

That is just what I feared. All your zeal and energy and devotion ought to be directed towards your art.

Robert.

As a playwright, I can devote all my energy to writing, but as a man I devote all my heart to you—and your love will only serve to inspire me with all the more energy in my undertaking.

Miss Powers.

Then you think that my love will encourage you?

Robert.

Your very presence inspires me—and your love will be the guiding light on my road to success.

Miss Powers.

Then I shall no more try to resist the impulse of my heart—which has belonged to you from the moment I met you. You have my heart—my love—my life.

Robert.

(*Embracing her.*) Without you, my life would be empty and barren. Your love will add lustre to my dreams, light to my life—and value to my achievements.

Miss Powers.

Hush—Father is coming.

(*The PROFESSOR—MR. FULTON—and MR. LEE enter—left door.*)

Mr. Fulton.

(*As they walk in.*) Of course I cannot give a definite answer now, but I will take the manuscript home with me to read it over carefully. The matter needs consideration. I am impressed with the play, but it will be a very expensive production and will require the best talent I can get. Otherwise a play like that would be a failure; it reaches the better class of people, and they want the best.

Prof. Powers.

Yes, read it over—slowly and carefully—and consider it.

Mr. Lee.

I would advise you Mr. Fulton to read the play twice.

Mr. Fulton.

People don't go to *see* a play twice. If they don't like it the first time, they never will like it.

Mr. Lee.

Some of the greatest successes have proved failures at first.

Mr. Fulton

Those are but rare exceptions to the rule

Miss Powers.

(*Aside, to the PROFESSOR.*) See that Robert does not go yet, papa.

Mr. Fulton.

(*To MOCKART.*) Mr. Mockart, I shall take the manuscript of your play with me and shall read it over, and in due time I shall call upon you and give you my definite answer.

Robert.

I hope that the decision will be in my favor.

Mr. Fulton.

Well, we'll see. Good-night, gentlemen.

Mr. Lee.

(*To MR. FULTON.*) Wait—I'll be along with you.

Prof. Powers.

Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Lee. I want you to talk it over with the Doctor and me alone.

(*MR. FULTON bows and goes out right door.*)

Prof. Powers.

Come Doctor.

Robert.

Isn't it rather late, Professor?

Prof. Powers.

That's all right. Come—come.

(*The PROFESSOR, ROBERT and MR. LEE go out, left door.*

MISS POWERS *seeing others go—runs to right door and calls MR. FULTON back.*)

Miss Powers.

Mr. Fulton—Mr. Fulton. (*MR. FULTON re-enters right door with his coat on his arm.*) Well, what are you going to do with it, Mr. Fulton?

Mr. Fulton.

(*Surprised.*) It is my coat—why I am going to put it on.

Miss Powers.

(*Disappointedly.*) Oh, I meant.—What are you going to do about the *play*.

Mr. Fulton.

I beg your pardon ; I thought you meant—what was I going to do with the coat.

Miss Powers.

Oh, no. I am anxious to know if you are going to produce the play?

Mr. Fulton.

I told your father I wanted to consider it. I want to read it over quietly, alone.

Miss Powers.

Yes, that is all right, but are you going to read it over with the intention of producing it, even if you do like it?

Mr. Fulton.

I don't know. I shall see.

Miss Powers.

Mr. Fulton, from your manner in speaking to my father, I inferred that you might read the manuscript, but even if you do like it you may not produce it.

Mr. Fulton.

That is true. It is an expensive production, and requires so many characters, it is a question if it will pay.

Miss Powers.

So !—I see !—It is a question of money—not whether the play is good or bad.

Mr. Fulton.

No ; if the play is good, money is no object, for a good play brings big returns.

Miss Powers.

But, you heard the critics say it was clever, and they were enthusiastic over it. Everybody says it is good—and some say it is great.

Mr. Fulton.

(*Laughing sarcastically.*) Yes, the critics—they can write—talk and give advice ; but just ask them to put up the cash and see if they will not think it over twice.

Miss Powers.

So, the whole question is money—money.

Mr. Fulton.

No, Miss Powers, you don't understand. A written play is like an inventor's model. It appears original and good, and you think it will take, but you cannot tell whether the invention is of any practical value until you have made a working test before the people, for they are the ones who are going to pay for it and make practical use of it. Now, a play is like an invention—the manuscript is the model; to put the invention to a practical test we must put the play before the public, for they are the real judges—and to make such an experiment is, naturally, a question of considerable expense.

Miss Powers.

So, I see. You mean if some one would stand the expense you would make the practical test and produce the play.

Mr. Fulton.

Not exactly that, but it is more likely that the play would be produced.

Miss Powers.

(*Musingly.*) I have a proposition I should like to make to you. Now, you seem to be impressed with Mr. Mockart's manuscript, but as I understand you are not ready to take the risk of producing the play. Well? I have a little money of my own, and if you promise me that the matter will only be between us two, I will stand the expense of the production.

Mr. Fulton.

Of course, it is not necessary to mention that I shall regard the matter as strictly confidential.

Miss Powers.

Now, then, Mr. Fulton, it is settled that the play will be produced?

Mr. Fulton.

No, I don't say that yet, for I must read it and think it over.

Miss Powers.

Read it over, and look for all the good points in it—(*growing intensely earnest*)—for (MISS POWERS runs to left door and looks off to see if anyone can overhear them, then quickly returns to FULTON, and in a suppressed but very emphatic voice says :) the play *must* be produced.

Mr. Fulton.

Then it *shall* be produced.

(MISS POWERS quickly offers her hand to FULTON in expression of gratitude.)

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT THIRD.

The scene represents a front room at DR. MOCKART'S house, opening through folding doors into a back parlor. The room is neatly but not expensively furnished. There is a door on the left, also one on the right; on the left there is a mantel and a parlor stove brightly burning. In the upper left hand corner there is a large old-fashioned book-case containing a large number of books, manuscripts and clippings. Towards the right a sofa, in centre a table, chairs, etc.

As the curtain rises, MRS. MOCKART and MR. MOELNER are seen in earnest conversation at left front; at the right, on sofa, the two daughters of MR. MOELNER are sitting; opposite them DR. MANDEL and MR. SCHAEFFER occupy chairs; the young ladies are both well dressed, and dressed alike; they are brunettes, with round faces, black hair and eyes, and nineteen and twenty-two years respectively, and resemble each other strongly.

Etta.

(Entering left door.) Mama, I cannot find Robert. He must have gone out.

Mrs. Mockart.

See if he is in his room.

Etta.

No, he is not there.

Schaeffer.

(To MISS LUCY MOELNER.) That is a nice way to entertain friends. When they come he goes out.

Miss Moelner.

It is the eccentricity of genius.

Schaeffer.

I call it the eccentricity of bad manners.

Miss Moelner.

(Slightly surprised.) Oh—Mr. Schaeffer, you have evidently forgotten that Robert is my cousin.

Schaeffer.

Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Moelner. He is your cousin, but that does not imply that he is a genius.

Miss Moelner.

Well, that is what the papers say about him.

Schaeffer.

Oh, the papers! They call him a genius, to-day, but to-morrow they may say he is a fool.

Miss Moelner.

At any rate, he is talented. He has accomplished something that not everybody can do, and under such circumstances that he deserves great credit.

Schaeffer.

What he has accomplished—anybody can accomplish. It is only a question of time and perseverance, and if a man possesses that, with a little intelligence—he can do it—anybody can do it.

Miss Moelner.

Ah!—patience and perseverance are great virtues in themselves (*in a different tone*) But, if you think it is so easy to write, why don't you try it, Mr. Schaeffer?

Schaeffer.

I might try a good many things, Miss Moelner. The trouble with me is that I don't believe in trying.

Miss Moelner.

Oh, I see, you mean that your father has done all the trying for you.

Schaeffer.

My father worked so hard—that it is a pity that I should do any work. He saved me the trouble.

They continue their conversation in low tone.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Aside to Mrs. Mockart.*) No. I don't think Mr. Fulton is going to produce the play on the mere recommendation of a few scribes. The papers say he only took it home for consideration, though I heard that some material support was promised Mr. Fulton in case he decided to produce the play.

Mrs. Mockart.

But I understood Mr. Fulton has positively accepted the play.

Mr. Moelner.

Lucy—read over the criticisms on Robert's play again. (*Lucy takes up a number of newspapers from the table.*)

Lucy.

(*Picking up a newspaper and reading.*) "At a recent 'At Home,' a Madison Avenue hostess, noted for her agreeable receptions, cleverly succeeded in 'killing two birds with one stone.' For not only did she afford her guests a rarely enjoyable entertainment, but succeeded in giving an as yet unknown playwright a professional introduction through the reading of his own work. That the play made an impression on the very friendly audience there is no doubt; the author has unquestionably shown talent. We do not care to say much, but when such a manager as Mr. Dan Fulton takes a play home with him for consideration, it is evident that it has some merits."

Mr. Moelner.

Just as I told you, Freda—only for 'consideration.'

Mrs. Mockart.

Dr. Mandel, you read the German papers. What have they to say about Robert's play?

Dr. Mandel.

The leading German paper simply says a few words. It hasn't a high opinion of Robert's originality. And, of course, if it finds nothing original in a new writer, it doesn't think it worth while to encourage him, and gives him the advice the poet gave to the shoemaker—"to stick to his last."

Lucy.

But, Robert says, that the critic of this paper, although he is a critic, is not so very original himself; now another, who is not so prominent, but has a very good reputation, differs from this paper entirely. He says: "Very skillful, very." He admits, however, that "the writer is not yet a master of his art, though he has shown a clever handling of the subject and a thorough knowledge of the technique of the drama."

Mr. Moelner.

(*Sneeringly.*) But isn't this critic a personal friend of our Professor.

Schaeffer.

(*Picking up paper.*) Here's a critic who advises him to go and learn proper English instead of trying to write plays.

Miss Lena Moelner.

(*Picking up paper.*) The Mercury says: (*reads*) "Not only those who pay to see diamonds and silks on the stage will like such a play, but the true lover of the drama will also appreciate it," and adds: "Why do not some of these 'independents' hunt out young writers like Mockart and produce their plays, instead of wasting time on dramas that only a small minority care for?"—There you are Mr. Schaeffer, one critic contradicts the other.

Mr. Moelner.

(*To Mrs. Mockart.*) So, you see, Freda, he has not made such a great success after all by his reading, and such recognition as he has obtained is only reading matter—of no value whatever—it is all on paper.

Mrs. Mockart.

I only wish the reading had been a complete failure, for then he would have given up this unfounded ambition of his and devoted himself to enlarging his practice.

Mr. Moelner.

Yes, of course, it would have been better, but now the plan must be carried out as we decided. I'll put up the money to produce the play. Of course, the play won't make much of a success, but, at any rate, his eyes will be opened to the fact that he isn't a writer, and that will cool down his enthusiasm, I fancy.

Mrs. Mockart.

Just as you say, Albert—just as you think is best. I will do anything to tear him away from this professor and his family, and show him that his best friend is his mother, and only his mother.

Mr. Moelner.

(*In a different tone.*) Freda, was it not rather ungrateful on

Robert's part, when he read his play at the Professor's house, not to have invited me, or at least asked Lucy and Lena?

Mrs. Mockart.

He is as ungrateful to his mother as he is to his uncle. Why, he did not even take the trouble to tell me that he was going to read his play to anyone! I heard it only through the newspapers.

Mr. Moelner.

Lucy felt awfully bad. However, I will do my best for my brother's son, and for the sake of my brother's wife. I will take him in hand and see that his play is produced. If it succeeds—very well and good. If not, it will bring him to his senses, and show him what a fool he has made of himself for so many years. But, for all you can tell, all of our plans may be fruitless, for possibly these few lines of notice may have turned his head so that he will accept none of my offers.

Mrs. Mockart.

Accept? Of course he will. He may not listen to any suggestions, but when you offer to produce his play he will be delighted, and, as you said, no manager will produce his play without financial support, and who can, who *will*, give him financial support? You know the saying is—"Everybody is a friend until the pocket— —."

Mr. Moelner.

(*Reflecting.*) Yes. Who can give him financial support? (*with change of voice.*) They say that this professor's daughter inherited quite a fortune from her aunt, not long ago, and you know that this daughter has rather charmed him. It was her idea that he should read his play, and at her home, and it is even rumored that it is she who promised financial assurance to Mr. Fulton, in case he decided to produce the play.

Mrs. Mockart.

What nonsense. These people are very nice, and very kind and all that; they may introduce him; they may give him a chance to become known to them and their friends. They may do everything for him, but when it comes to a question of money—they will stop and think about it twice—even if it is a scientific professor who has a great love for art.

Mr. Moelner.

Where is Robert, anyway? I should like to hear what he has to say on the matter.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Goes to book-case at left upper corner and opens it.*) His notebooks are here. He must be up-stairs. (*Pointing to contents of case.*) See, Albert, this rubbish represents six years of work.

Mr. Moelner.

And, so far, it is only good for the waste-basket.

Mrs. Mockart.

I feel like taking it all and throwing it into the fire.

Mr. Moelner.

No, you mustn't do that.

Mrs. Mockart.

Yes, I shall have to do it some day.

(*MRS. MOCKART goes out at left, followed by MR. MOELNER.*)

(*LENA goes over to LUCY.*)

(*MR. SCHAEFFER crosses over to MR. MANDEL.*)

Lena.

Lucy, Dr. Mandel says that he would be most happy to join our Thanksgiving Day excursion to Old Point Comfort. May I invite him?

Lucy.

You may, if you like.

Lena.

He is so nice—and Mr. Schaeffer?

Lucy.

I am afraid that Mr. Schaeffer would not care to join us. He is such a self-satisfied man.

Lena.

But he is so rich. Doctor Mandel says that his father left him about a million.

Lucy.

Only a million. Why, I hear that he was worth two millions before he was introduced to me.

Lena.

(*Looking at Lucy.*) So you mean that I ought to invite him?

Lucy.

Just as you like. He would no doubt be a great attraction to our friends.

Lena.

A million would be an attraction to any girl. I would invite both Dr. Mandel and Mr. Schaeffer. They are both jolly good company. (*They continue their conversation in low tone.*)

Dr. Mandel.

(*To MR. SCHAEFFER.*) The deuce—but hasn't Robert got two charming cousins?

Schaeffer.

Charming is no name—they are really beautiful. What sort of a man this Robert is, I don't understand; why, he never mentioned to us that he had two such lovely cousins.

Dr. Mandel.

I knew it. I knew them when they were two little bits of girls—and used to live in this neighborhood—and my father remembers when Mr. Moelner and Robert's father started business in a small room in a rear tenement house.

Schaeffer.

Yes, and now he is the greatest man in his line.

Dr. Mandel.

He has to thank Robert's father for that—for he was the manager and the brains of the firm. But, poor man, he is dead and buried; his family has none of the enormous wealth of which he laid the foundation;—Moelner has it all.

Schaeffer.

That's often the case—one man does the work and the others get the profits. Please don't tell them that *I* am rich.

Dr. Mandel.

I am sorry, but I have made that fatal mistake already.

Schaeffer.

Then, I suppose everybody will first introduce my money, and then myself.

Dr. Mandel.

These are girls who do not care for money—they have social aspirations.

Schaeffer.

Social aspirations? Yes? Where do your social aspirations come in without money—when the first requisite to enter that private circle is money—and plenty of it too. And when your money dies—you may be sure of a *social burial*.

Lucy.

(*To DR. MANDEL.*) Have you known my cousin Robert long, Dr. Mandel?

Dr. Mandel.

As long as I have known you.

Lucy.

(*In surprise.*) Really? I thought I had never met you before.

Dr. Mandel.

Indeed? I remember you when you were a little bit of a girl and lived right across the street here, where those high red houses are.

Lena.

(*Astonished.*) You mean those tenement-houses?

Dr. Mandel.

Yes,—there were small houses then—and when more people came, they built these larger ones, and they called them tenements.

Lena.

It must have been quite a different neighborhood at that time.

Dr. Mandel.

Yes, it was different in a way, but as more emigrants came here they built larger houses.

Lena.

Why, only the foreign element lives in these houses now.

Dr. Mandel.

For that matter, we are all foreigners, except those who have *Indian blood*.

(ROBERT enters left door.)

Lena.

Where have you been, cousin Robert?

Robert.

For a walk.

Lucy.

In such weather?

Robert.

Such weather gives a man respiration—aspiration—and inspiration!

Schaeffer.

You disappeared without even an excuse.

Robert.

Ah, excuse—excuses are only empty explanations, my dear Schaeffer.

(ROBERT takes off gloves, coat and hat.)

(LUCY hangs the coat and hat on a hook in upper right corner.)

(ROBERT takes notes and papers out of several pockets and puts them in book-case.)

Schaeffer.

Ah, you are again depositing more of your work in your workshop.

Lucy.

Where did you write it?

Robert.

On the street—now you can call the street my workshop, if you like.

Dr. Mandel.

So, the street is your workshop. (*Ironically.*) Then the air must be your inspiration—the sun your guide—the earth your companion.

Schaeffer.

And the sky your world—the moon your neighbor, and the stars your friends.

Robert.

No—Schaeffer, there you are wrong—my friends are not stars, but fools. *(All laugh.)*

(ROBERT goes over to the stove and warms his hands.

SCHAEFFER goes over and joins ROBERT at stove.)

Schaeffer.

(Aside to ROBERT.) I wish that I had such a fair cousin, and as devoted as she seems to be to you.

Robert.

(Laughs.) Well, it does astonish me. I cannot account for it; for this same fair cousin, when I called on her at her home not long ago, received me with cold indifference.

Schaeffer.

But now you are on the point of success—and, you know—men are judged by their success.

Robert.

(Laughs.) Success is a very poor thing to judge by, my dear Schaeffer, for it spoils more men than failure.

Schaeffer.

Please don't tell them that my success spoiled me.

Robert.

Oh, no, fear not; you have done nothing in which to succeed or fail.

Schaeffer.

Then, what am I? Nothing?

Robert.

You are a continuation of another generation.

Lena.

(Approaching them.) Robert, your friends think that while some of your critics praise you, others have been unjust and simply ridiculed your play.

Robert.

I can't help that. There is in the drama as in politics a class of chronic kickers.

(MR. MOELNER and MRS. MOCKART enter right door.)

Mr. Moelner.

Ali, here he is.

(*Goes over to ROBERT.*)

Mrs. Mockart.

We were looking for you, Robert.

(*Goes to ROBERT and MR. MOELNER.*)

Dr. Mandel.

(*To SCHAEFFER.*) Had we not better go? I think they want to talk over some family matters.

(*They prepare to leave.*)

Lena.

(*Aside to her father.*) Papa, invite Robert's friends to call on us.

Mr. Moelner.

(*As they go towards left door.*) Gentlemen: we are at home every Friday, and we should be pleased to have you call, if opportunity presents itself.

Mandel and Schaeffer.

(*Both.*) Thanks. We should be most happy to do so.

Dr. Mandel.

I hope that before long we shall all meet together in a box to see Robert's play produced.

Schaeffer.

(*Laughingly.*) Mandel, you mean in a wooden box? (*All laugh.*)

(*MANDEL and SCHAEFFER both exit left door.*)

Mr. Moelner.

(*Aside to LUCY.*) Go and tell Robert how glad you are that he is on the road to success. (*Change of voice.*) Incidentally, ask him whether he has seen your magazine article.

Lucy.

Yes, Papa.

Mr. Moelner.

Be nice and cordial—although not too forward. Yet a little flattery and praise sometimes do a great deal of good. Men are so conceited, you know.

Lucy.

I think it will be of little use, papa. I fear he will never forgive us for having ignored him so long.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Angrily.*) Make no explanations. Do as I tell you.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*To ROBERT, aside.*) Be nice and good. I think uncle will do a great deal for you if you know how to take him.

Robert.

I cannot be more nice than I am, or more good than I always have been.

Mrs. Mockart.

You know he is a rich and successful man. They have power and they want to be respected.

Robert.

Every man desires to be respected, but they who want respect must show consideration for others and not misuse their advantages.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Agitatedly.*) Now—now—now. Don't begin again Robert. We have not seen them for years, and chance has again brought us together. It is always better to make a friend than an enemy, especially in your own family.

Robert.

I don't want to make an enemy of anybody. I know what he is here for, but that can never be.

Mrs. Mockart.

Cannot be? And why not? He is after your welfare.

Robert.

Yes? I understand his scheme. But I got along without his assistance for a long time, and I can surely get along without him now. I am bound to win my battle alone—win, I say, mother!

Mr. Moelner.

(*To ROBERT, loud.*) Robert, did you see Lucy's article in the current magazine?

Robert.

(*Surprised.*) Lucy's Article? Magazine? What was it? In what magazine?

Mr. Moelner.

I quite forget. What magazine was it, Lucy?

Lucy.

It was a criticism on the late Horse Show—and it appeared in a magazine called “The Doings of the Horse.”

Robert.

Oh! About horses. I thought it might be about something else; but I am not a horse; I am a man, and care to read only of the doings of men—not horses.

Lucy.

But the horse—the Horse Show is so fashionable nowadays.

Robert.

Fashion is sometimes facetious.

Lucy.

But, it is nice—stylish, you know.

Robert.

Style is stupidity oftentimes.

Lena.

(*To MRS. MOCKART.*) I think our cousin Robert is ill-tempered and ill-humored to-day.

Mrs. Mockart.

No, it is the strain—the constant strain—the suspense that is killing him.

Lucy.

But papa is going to help him.

Mrs. Mockart.

Your papa has not spoken to him yet.

Lucy.

Papa, why don't you tell Robert the object of your visit to-day?

Mr. Moelner.

Be patient; I will.

Etta.

(*To ROBERT, aside.*) Robert, look at our cousins Lucy's and Lena's dresses. How nice! Aren't they rich? And how expensive they must be—perfectly lovely!

Robert.

To look at.

Etta.

If your play is accepted—and produced, and you make a lot of money, you must get me just such an identical dress as theirs. (*Fervently.*) Oh, it is nice to have nice things!

Robert.

But nicer yet is that which you have got and other people can not get.

Etta.

But if you make a lot of money, you can get them.

Robert.

Oh, yes, get them; what was money made for but to get them?

Mr. Moelner.

(*Aloud.*) Robert, have you heard anything yet from Mr. Fulton?

Robert.

No, not yet. He promised that if he liked my play he would call and see me personally. I may, though, hear from him to-night.

Mr. Moelner.

You expect to have a favorable answer from him, no doubt.

Robert.

Not more than from any other manager. There is nothing sure yet. You are not sure with any manager, even if he does accept your play.

Mr. Moelner.

So, even acceptance may not mean that he will produce it.

Robert.

Yes. I shall have to be patient, that is all, but some day it shall be produced.

Mr. Moelner.

Robert, if I should offer you, in behalf of the family, to give you financial assistance, and produce the play at once, what would you say?

Robert.

I should simply say you are too late.

Mr. Moelner.

(*In surprise.*) Too late?

Robert.

Yes.

Mrs. Mockart.

Why too late?

Robert.

There was a time when I asked uncle for help and his answer was that he had no money to invest in experiments; that they do not pay and are not profitable. He advised me to go to people who can judge plays. I followed his advice—and his offer is now too late.

Mrs. Mockart.

No, it is not too late.

Mr. Moelner.

Don't imagine, Robert, if I offer to produce the play, that I believe it worth anything. I only do it to show you that you are no writer, and to bring you to your senses, so that you will waste no more time, but will go about your work—your profession.

Robert.

I know that—and still you are “too late.”

Mr. Moelner.

Then you have assurance that the play will be produced?

Robert.

No.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*In surprise.*) No? Why, then, do you refuse to accept uncle's assistance?

Robert.

Because I have confidence in myself.

Mr. Moelner.

How do you expect that your play will be produced?

Robert.

On its merits.

Mr. Moelner.

(*With sarcasm.*) On its merits?—“Merits” is such a misleading word, when it is not helped along with money.

Mrs. Mockart.

Then you depend for the production of your play on the strength of the few lines of notice you received?

Robert.

No— but I have hope.

Mrs. Mockart.

But what a bitter word hope is—without help.

Robert.

Hope is a grand word to me.

Mr. Moelner.

Then you have evidently hope that somebody will give you financial assistance—and you prefer that strangers should have the benefit of your work rather than your own family?

Robert.

(*Cool, sarcastic manner.*) Ah, you now speak of “my work”—“my work” uncle. You have evidently forgotten yourself—and you already speak of “benefits”—“benefits.” You fear that someone else may reap those benefits.

Mr. Moelner.

Ah, your “work”—“rubbish”!

Mrs. Mockart.

Robert—it is my wish, and I beg of you as your mother that this play should be produced by the help of your family, if it is to be produced at all.

Robert.

(*Indignantly.*) Mother, when the lash of want was upon me, with a force that tore my flesh, the family did not offer me help to heal my wounds. Now my wounds begin to heal, and I want no help that is forced upon me!

Mrs. Mockart.

But, it is your mother's wish.

Robert.

Even a mother may be wrong.

Mrs. Mockart.

Ungrateful son! You talk to me like that—to me, your mother,

who gave you life. Do you know that your very blood belongs to me.

Mr. Moelner.

Freda—there is no use talking to him. You are speaking to a man with a “swelled head”!

Robert.

Before—I had a “foolish” head—now I have a “swelled” head. But, no matter what head I have; it is my own.

Mr. Moelner.

The few lines of notice that the critics gave you will be your ruin! Remember, critics are only to criticise. Your success, so far, is on paper, and on paper only. The real judges are the people; and wait, you will yet come begging to me to give you a chance for a hearing before the public!

Robert.

I assure you, I will not. The one thing that makes me feel more than anything else that I shall succeed is your offer to help me; for where you offer to help, there must be an assurance of coming benefits—benefits.

Mr. Moelner.

(*In disgust.*) I see now, there is no use of talking with you!—Lucy!—Lena!—Get ready! We will go!

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Excitedly.*) Wait, Albert!—Albert—wait! Be patient. It does not concern you alone—it concerns me as well—for if he will not give in, I will have to go too. I have suffered long enough—I cannot stand it any longer.

Mr. Moelner.

What does *he* care—this obstinate, ungrateful son.

Robert.

You say I am ungrateful. Can you state a single instance? In what am I ungrateful?

Mr. Moelner.

Yes—I will give you an instance. (*Quietly.*) Robert, whatever you may say against me, I have helped you time and time

again. When you read your play at the professor's house—when you took so decided a step—why did you not invite me and my family?

Robert.

Because—you don't belong to that class.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Infuriated.*) I don't belong to that class?—and a beggar like you belongs to it?

Robert.

You don't mean *that*, uncle?

Mr. Moelner.

I mean every word that I say—you are a beggar—and if it had not been for me, you would have been starving. You are a beggar—

Robert.

(*Infuriated.*) Take those words back, uncle—take that word back—the very air of this room ought to strangle you. You know very well yourself that it is a lie. I have been honestly and patiently working for a certain purpose for many years—and the help you gave me was not yours—but *mine—mine*—The very clothes you wear—the house you possess—and everything you have—belongs to me. For, with your cheating and lies, you took away the work on which my father had spent twenty years. If it had not been for my father you would have been to-day a beggar—and morally you are nothing but a beggar anyway—

Mrs. Mockart.

Robert!—Robert!—What is that talk for? What is the use? Why bring in your father? What has he to do with it. That affair has long been forgotten.

Robert.

I shall never forget it! And I want to let him know that he is a cheat and a lie. That he has not sense enough to acquire anything—not to speak of wealth. That what help he gave us, should have been willingly and freely given—not have been thrown in our faces.

Mrs. Mockart.

Now, keep still. You have lost your senses. You don't know

what you are talking about. He came here to help you, and you have done nothing but deliberately insult and offend him.

(MR. MOELNER *motions to the girls to get their wraps from the next room.*)

(*The girls go into the back parlor, there is a long silence; the girls return with their wraps, and ETTA helps them to put them on.*)

Mr. Moelner.

I would not care to argue with a man who has a temper, and is at the same time a fool. But it seems rather queer, that people whom only a few months ago you had never heard of—nor seen before—should be preferred as friends—advisers—to your own family. But, I want to warn you, with all your cleverness, these people who only a few months ago, were perfect strangers, may, by the slightest misunderstanding, in a still shorter time throw you over and forget the mere fact of your existence

Robert.

I am sure that will not be the case—for they are people who live a life for life's sake and not for mere material existence; and besides, as it happens, they were the first to volunteer to help me and I am bound to stand by them, no matter what happens or how much *they* may change.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Emphatically.*) It seems to me, that what keeps you so suddenly—strangely and inexplicably tied to them must undoubtedly be not so much the Professor, as the Professor's daughter's petticoat.

(*Prolonged silence. ROBERT goes and rests left hand on the table, with his back to the others and with bowed head.*)

Robert.

(*Slowly, quietly and emphatically.*) Uncle—if it were not for the presence of your daughters—and respect for my mother—I should turn you out of the house.

(MR. MOELNER *opens right door, and motioning to his daughters to go out, follows them and slams the door. ROBERT sinks into a chair. ETTA goes and kneels by him, and, leaning against him, weeps. MRS. MOCK-ART, on the other side of the room, sits as if bewildered and in deep pain and thought.*)

Robert.

Etta—Etta—what's the matter? What are you crying for?

(*ETTA rises without speaking and goes out sobbing.*)

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Going to ROBERT.*) Robert—you have deeply insulted your uncle.

Robert.

I told you the truth.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*In a different tone.*) No, Robert, you have deliberately insulted your uncle.

Robert.

If you call truth an insult, then you are right. Has he not lied and cheated us out of father's work? Was not father entitled to a share and interest in the business before he died? Who laid the foundation of this vast fortune that he possesses? Was it not father's conscientious and faithful efforts—efforts that were beyond his strength—and, I may say, shortened his life? Like an heroic soldier, who although wounded and knows that the wound is fatal, he battled on! What did he do it for, but to build up this business, that his family should be provided for when he was no more? And after he died uncle's miserly character showed itself—he took advantage of your ignorance and helplessness and swallowed up everything.

Mrs. Mockart.

That is a question of the past, and who was right? I don't know. What concerns us now is the present, and at present (*slowly and emphatically*) we need uncle; you will call him back, Robert.

Robert.

Mother, I will not call him back.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Emphatically.*) You must call him back.

Robert.

Never! Never!

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Quietly.*) Then I shall leave you!

Robert.

(*In consternation.*) Mother, surely you are not in earnest?

Mrs. Mockart.

I am in earnest as I am in sorrow.

Robert.

(*In greater surprise.*) Mother!--and Etta! What will become of her?

Mrs. Mockart.

Etta will have to choose between you and me.

Robert.

Mother, you would not do that?

Mrs. Mockart.

Will you do as I tell you? (*ROBERT is silent.*) Now, I see—what your uncle Albert has foreseen—and he was right. He could not understand that the interest of these lately acquired friends,—these *strangers*—with their sudden and inexplicable influence over you—is not simply their interest in you and your writings—but some selfish motive; and so far you have had nothing from them—simply their false flattery—and for this foolishness you cast aside your family. Yes, even your mother.

Robert.

Oh, mother! You are unjust to them, and you bitterly wrong me (*looking her in the face.*) You are wrong, mother.

(*There is a prolonged silence.*)

Mrs. Mockart.

Whether I am wrong or not, only the future can show. But, now you have treated your uncle unfairly and unjustly, and either you will go and call him back or I shall go (*pauses a moment.*) Your answer?

(*ROBERT makes no reply.*)

Mrs. Mockart.

Then, I shall leave the house immediately.

Robert.

Mother!—do whatever you think is right.

(*ROBERT sinks into a chair, resting his elbows on his knees.*)

(*MRS. MOCKART slowly exits left door.*)

(*After a pause ROBERT gets up and goes to the door where his mother went out, as if about to call her, but finally goes over to the right corner and puts on his coat and hat and goes over to the right door.*)

Robert.

(*To himself.*) No, I will not.

(*Takes off coat and hat and returns to his former position.*)

(*In a moment the bell is heard ringing and ETTA is seen coming out from centre door, then turns and wipes her eyes and goes out left door—returning opens the door for the PROFESSOR and his wife and daughter, who enter; ETTA closes the door behind them. When they see that ROBERT is engrossed in thought, MISS POWERS motions to her father and mother to retire into the back parlor, which they do; she remains standing at left wall; ROBERT hearing someone.*)

Robert.

Etta, why don't you open the door? I thought I heard the bell.

(*Pauses.*) Why don't you answer Etta?

(*MISS POWERS makes a gesture indicating her embarrassment.*)

Robert.

Come here, my dear sister.

(*MISS POWERS again indicates her inability to comply, with another gesture, pointing to the door of the back parlor, where her parents are.*)

Robert.

But I see, *you* are angry with me, too—but don't worry. Mother will not leave us. In a very short time everything will be all right.

Miss Powers.

Everything is all right—your play is accepted and will be produced.

(*ROBERT, in startled surprise, springs up and looks first*

toward the right—and seeing no one there turns in the other direction, and to his astonishment sees Miss POWERS.)

Robert.

Is it really you, Miss Powers? Or is it simply an illusion of my imagination? Were your words really true? Or was it a dream?

He starts toward her; as he does so she passes to the right and the PROFESSOR and MRS. POWERS appear at the right side of the folding doors.)

Prof. Powers.

Yes, it is true, Mr. Fulton has accepted your play, and his own theatrical company will soon produce it.

Robert.

(Enthusiastically crying out.) So, then, at last—my dreamland—my aspirations—become a actuality. Joy fills my soul! I have reached the highest point of my life! The suspense is over! I am relieved—I am more than happy!

(In a dazed condition ROBERT goes to left door, where his mother went out.)

(Pointing to the door.) My poor mother is behind this door making preparations to leave me. Poor mother—you have mistaken my pleasure for pain—and my efforts for suffering—and with a mother's heart you saw but failure and disappointment in store for me. But now comes the dawn of my success, and relief is at hand. It is here! You will no more depress—discourage me—for you will see that I was right—and you were wrong—and right I am. *(Pointing to right door where his uncle went out.)* And you, poor uncle, who called me a beggar, you are blind to what is beautiful—and do not regard a man as a man—you weigh him only by his gold—you do not know the purpose of man's existence. Therefore you could not conceive the purpose of my aims and efforts—and now—I hope the results may open your eyes. You will no more call me a penniless beggar. *(Turning to the PROFESSOR and MRS. and MISS POWERS.)* They say that you are strangers to me—mere strangers—human beings to be strangers to each other! But to you I have to give my utmost thanks. You understand me. You know the longings of my mind and heart. You felt the fire that was burning in me—and with the true

friendship that is born from a similarity of thought and feeling, you spurred me on in my efforts. My heart goes out to you—and my thanks (*to the PROFESSOR*) as a man to a man.

(*Falls exhaustedly on chair.*)

Mrs. Powers.

(*Going to ROBERT.*) You don't seem well, Doctor. Is anything the matter?

Miss Powers.

You are ill.

(*Offering him a glass of water.*)

Robert.

(*Drinks.*) Thank you. I am all right now; I am all right. I was surprised and astonished at your presence—by the good news—the best things come unexpectedly. My good fortune has overpowered me (*Slight pause. Rising.*) I beg your pardon—won't you be seated? (*They take chairs.*)

Mrs. Powers.

This is your office, Doctor?

Robert.

Yes, this is my office, study and everything combined.

(*Going to bookcase, where is Mss. and opens it.*)

Professor, this will interest you; this is my workshop. You see I have in it enough material to work upon for the next twenty years

(*They all go over to bookcase: the PROFESSOR examining same.*)

Robert.

(*To all.*) You see these boxes; each of these contains ideas for a different play. Whenever a new idea strikes me, I just write it down and put it with the other material for that play.

Prof. Powers.

(*Reading.*) A Romance of a Roman Prince.

Robert.

That is the title of an historical play.

Miss Powers.

(*Reading.*) Mr. Phillips of Philadelphia.

Robert.

That is going to be a comedy. The principal character is a German-American (*laughingly*) who made a fortune out of Philadelphia poultry.

Prof. Powers.

And I suppose spent his money in New York?

Mrs. Powers.

(*Reading.*) His Partner's Wife.

Robert.

That is a play of American life.

Miss Powers.

(*Reading again.*) Mr. Roche of Rochester.

Robert.

That is a comedy which deals with a very rich oil man, who spent his best years in making a fortune, and neglected his life as a man—then came to New York on a visit and fell in love, for the first time in his life.

Prof. Powers.

And afterwards was sorry for it?

Robert.

No, he felt sorry, that it did not happen before.

Mrs. Powers.

And are the stories of all these plays written out?

Robert.

Oh, no; I carry them in my head for years.

Prof. Powers.

It will be easy sailing for all these (*pointing to bookcase*) after your play has been produced. I am certain that the morning after the opening night the world will proclaim "A new writer is discovered."

Robert.

I only hope they will not say "A new dreamer was discovered."
(*All laugh.*)

Prof. Powers.

History so often repeats itself. Some men have gone about for years, suffering and struggling for recognition, and afterwards the world wondered how could such a man exist without hearing of him.

Mrs. Powers.

And that is what some of the critics predicted about your play. They could not understand, why not even one manager could see anything of value in your writings. And they added, "this shows, again, that many managers deal in materials that they have but little knowledge of."

Prof. Powers.

Yes, even Mr. Fulton had to be influenced by Mr. Webster's opinion and mine, before he decided to produce the play.

Robert.

But, is it a certainty that he will produce it?

Prof. Powers.

Oh, yes, a certainty beyond doubt. He called upon me to-day and told me that his own company would put it in actual rehearsal next week, and they, you know, are the best we have in this country to-day.

Robert.

I am glad, indeed, and if I succeed I shall attribute my success to you, Professor.

(At this point MRS. MOCKART enters left door, dressed to go out; as she sees the strangers she stops and remains standing, gazing at them.)

Robert.

This is my mother—Professor Powers. *(They all rise.)*

Mrs. Mockart.

Yes, I am his unfortunate mother.

Prof. Powers.

Why unfortunate? I should rather say you are fortunate, very fortunate indeed to have a son possessed with such natural gifts as to become a writer, a dramatist.

Mrs. Mockart.

I should prefer that he had fewer gifts and be more of a son.

Prof. Powers.

It is true that a talented boy will be more apt to neglect his family and be more attentive to his work, but so much the better for his family, and it does not imply that he is any less his mother's son, because he is able to do things that seem to you out of the ordinary.

Mrs. Mockart.

I have a fear of those people who do extraordinary things.

Prof. Powers.

It is only extraordinary to people who don't try—but very ordinary to those who make efforts. Now, Mrs. Mockart, I was a poor farmer's boy, and my father never cared that I should be any more than a farmer like himself. But I was not contented to raise potatoes in summer and to sleep in winter. I had a craving for knowledge, to know more about the sky that I saw with my eyes above me—to know more about the people who lived around me, so I decided to go to the city; I ran away from home—without means—without friends—with no one—to get an education. At my first attempt I failed. When I returned home, my father and my friends mocked me and ridiculed me with their sneers and their stupidity. I did not care, but I tried, and tried again and again, and when at last success came, and I became a college professor, they thought that I had done an extraordinary thing. It is the same thing with your son Robert; you consider him now queer and neglectful; after his success, you will see him with different eyes.

Mrs. Mockart.

But here, Professor, is a different story; you studied—you succeeded; but Robert, after getting his education, branched off in a different line. He wants to write, but to write a man must have knowledge—experience—that requires a lifetime.

Prof. Powers.

But that's just where you are wrong, Mrs. Mockart. The man who attempts to succeed in writing—by learning and experience is never and never will be a writer—in the true meaning of the word. That is a knowledge that comes from within the man him-

self—and no matter what line he has learned—nature forces him to give it up and yield to this instinctive and intuitive knowledge—and that is what Robert has done. He writes from spontaneous impulse, like a true writer.

Mrs. Mockart.

Professor, you are talking silly prattle—and I am sorry to tell you, that the thirty years you have learned and taught books, have made you little better than a foolish child.

Robert.

Mother, the Professor is my friend. What you have against me concerns me and me only, but I insist that you do not insult my friends.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*Sneering.*) Insist—indeed—I am done with you and do not want to know you or your friends. They are strangers to me; I never saw them before in my life—and I don't want to see them again.

Robert.

(*In the utmost anger.*) Mother, you don't know what you are saying.

Mrs. Mockart.

You are driving me to my grave.

Mrs. Powers.

Mrs. Mockart, although I do not wish to interfere—but I must. You are not only doing a great injustice to Robert, but you are simply tormenting yourself and him unnecessarily. On the contrary, I would fight with my last breath to help a young man who tried to accomplish something higher and better. You ought to be proud of him, and rather praise and encourage than censure and discourage.

Mrs. Mockart.

You tell me that—me, his mother—who nourished him and watched him grow from day to day; who worked and tried to educate him at the expense of all others; he represented all my hopes of success—the flower of my life—yes, my very life, and you think that I, his mother, would try to spoil his career—as you say? If I only knew he was going in the right direction. When we plant corn, we expect corn. When you plant flowers, you expect flowers, nothing else. When you study law, you expect to

be a lawyer. When you study chemistry, you expect to become a chemist—but he has studied one thing and is trying to become another.

(ETTA *entering centre door.*)

Prof. Powers.

That is no comparison at all, Mrs. Mockart. It is not a question of study or learning. His writing is a creation—an invention of his dramatic instinct. Like the inventor, he sees certain things before him and he reproduces them in substance, without study or learning, and the same thing with a painter, who sees a picture in his imagination and paints it on his canvas, and this also applies to Robert. He sees and feels certain characters and he writes them down.

Mrs. Mockart.

Those stories are very good for you to tell to Robert, but not to me. I may not have the education that you have, but life's experience has hardened me and educated me to be practical, and I say you are simply talking nonsense.

Robert.

Mother, why do you insult them? They have not done anything to you.

Mrs. Mockart.

They have not done anything to me? Why they have stolen my life's work like highway robbers, with their foolish empty flattery they have enticed you from your humble home. You never look at anybody—even your own mother—and you keep crying out, "These are the people who understand me; these are the people whom I want; they know my value. They are the real people." They look to me like educated fools.

Robert.

If you continue to insult my friends, either you or I must leave this house immediately.

Mrs. Mockart.

So—you want me to go—you actually turn me out of this house. Very well, I will go, but before I leave I will destroy your work as you have mine.

(*Rushes to bookcase and seizing a lot of Mss. tears them up.*)

—throws them on the floor, and then throws them into the fire. Before she can return for more MISS POWERS closes the doors of case and stands before them with outspread arms. MRS. MOCKART turns, and seeing her way barred assumes attitude of indignant astonishment.)

(QUICK CURTAIN.)

(ETTA going to ROBERT falls in his arms weeping.)
(At rise of curtain on call, MRS. MOCKART at door about to exit, looking angrily at others. ETTA on ROBERT'S arm, weeping.)

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT FOURTH.

(A room behind the stage. The scene takes place during the first night's performance of the play in a New York theatre. There are two large doors in the centre of the back scene leading to the stage, also a door on the left and one on the right. In the room there are different paraphernalia for stage work, furniture, etc. As the curtain rises, ROBERT and MR. FULTON are seen peeping in at the middle door, at the stage.)

Robert.

How quiet the audience is.

Mr. Fulton.

Cool. Very cold—actually like ice.

Robert.

The play is only at its beginning. Not a single point of importance has as yet been brought out.

Mr. Fulton.

I hope luck will be with us to-night, and that our undertaking will be a success. *(They shake hands.)*

Robert.

I hope it will. *(Listens.)* But they are so silent—so quiet.

Mr. Fulton.

That you don't understand. Perfect silence is the best sign, for it means perfect attention, and perfect attention is admiration—and that is better than applause.

(Here applause is heard from the outside.)

Mr. Fulton.

(Peeping through the door quickly.) That is nothing—only the entrance of a favorite actor.

(The LEADING MAN enters from left, and the LEADING

LADY *from right. They meet, go to centre door and stand waiting for their cue.*)

Robert.

(*To LEADING MAN.*) No—no. You enter from the other side; she enters from the centre.

(*LEADING MAN turns to go to the right, turns back and comes to centre.*)

Robert.

I wish you success to-night, Mr. Rodman (*Giving him his hand.*) Do your best—your very best.

Leading Man.

I will do my best—but my success depends upon my luck.

Robert.

Please play that scene in this act as I told you before, and you will see afterwards that I was right, although I have not the experience that you have.

Leading Man.

I will see. It all depends on how the public take it. I will first play it my way, and if I see that the public don't take to it, I will play it your way.

Robert.

Then you propose to follow your own fancy first, and only after that fails, my idea comes next.

Leading Man.

Yes, and I come first.

(*Exits right door.*)

Mr. Fulton.

(*Alarmed.*) They cough—they cough. Damn them! they must all have the grippe. (*To LEADING LADY.*) Your make up is natural and gives your part an atmosphere of loveliness and charm, Miss Strong. I spared no expense or work on my part, and now our work is in your hands. If you succeed, we succeed. If you fail, we fail.

Miss Strong—Leading Lady.

I have always done my best—but to-night I will do the very best I can, not only for your sake and mine, but for the new writer, who deserves undoubted recognition.

Robert.

Quick, Miss Strong. There is your cue.

(MISS STRONG *exits quickly*; *as she does so, prolonged and enthusiastic applause is heard.*)

(LEADING MAN *re-enters right.*)

Robert.

(*To LEADING MAN.*) It was good—it was good. You see I was right. The audience did not take to it the way you wanted it, but rather liked it in a comedy way, as I created it.

Leading Man.

“Created it” is good. *I created it!* You mean you *wrote* it.

Robert.

But you see the audience like the scene only in a comedy way.

Leading Man.

What does this damned fool of an audience know? They don't know what they want. They come to laugh, and if I could only make up for my part in a night-shirt, they would laugh more than at any comedy you can ever write.

Robert.

You are sore because they don't want to take your acting seriously.

Leading Man.

What do they understand of what art is—seriously or not seriously—or what an artist is?

(*Applause is heard in the theatre as the LEADING LADY enters at centre door.*)

Leading Lady.

(*To LEADING MAN.*) Hello, John. What are you doing here? You are supposed to be now in Holland.

Leading Man.

In the play I am supposed to be in Holland, and it makes no difference if, personally, I am in hell.

Leading Lady.

Why, you haven't done so badly.

Mr. Fulton.

He is sore because the audience didn't take to the scene as he wanted to play it.

Robert.

The next scene you can play seriously. You are supposed to be an impulsive and impatient character—but in the next scene you will be in the presence of the lady you are in love with, and, no matter how rough a man is under some circumstances, he can behave himself like a gentleman. If you should play that scene in a rough and boisterous manner like the last one, it would be an utter failure, because it would be false and unnatural, for a man, no matter how unpolished he is, in the presence of his lady-love will be kind and sympathetic. He will hide the rough points and will make an effort to bring out the finest of his nature.

Leading Man.

(*To LEADING LADY, sotto voce.*) The way that kid talks gives me a pain. He speaks in a manner that leads one to imagine that he is great. I should like to know where he learned it all.

Leading Lady.

What do you want, John? No matter if he has learned it or not, he understands it. It is born in him.

Leading Man.

Like you say that you were an actress when you were in your cradle.

Leading Lady.

I will be an actress, even when I am in my coffin.

Leading Man.

Certainly; you will be a dead actress. But, why talk this way? The kind of audience that exist to-day don't surprise me at all. Look at a mere understudy—little Joe. What a success he made to-day, and how the people roared with laughter at every word he uttered—a mere fresh understudy—without any schooling or experience.

Leading Lady.

I think he deserves it. He was clever.

Leading Man.

Yes, it was pretty good—but it was forced—and besides, such a gentlemanly role can only be played by an actor who really is a gentleman.

Leading Lady.

What difference does it make? He accomplished what was asked of him, and to arouse laughter a man must possess wit; just as a man cannot impart virtue if he does not possess virtue. If he made them laugh, he must possess some of the qualities of a comedian.

Leading Man.

Nonsense—you can make people laugh by a stick. (*A cat passing by.*) You see that cat. Open those two doors (*pointing to centre*), let that cat walk out on to the stage, and they will laugh more than at all the wit an actor can utter—or that a writer can write.

(*Applause is heard inside in the theatre, and from the centre door other actors call.*)

Actors.

(*Calling.*) Miss Strong, the Act is over. You are called.

(*She runs out, followed by the LEADING MAN. ROBERT and MR. FULTON peep out at centre door. The clamor outside indicates great enthusiasm. Pause. Second call for LEADING LADY.*)

Robert.

That is quite encouraging, Mr. Fulton, don't you think so?

Mr. Fulton.

The applause has an earnest and enthusiastic ring. Of course, we cannot depend entirely upon that; people in the theatre are apt—out of politeness—to look pleasant, when they are really very much bored.

Robert.

So disappointment and displeasure will not make an American audience discourteous?

Mr. Fulton.

No.—And real merriment give them real pleasure, and they are the first to appreciate and applaud anything of genuine merit.

(*Enter LEADING MAN and LEADING LADY, followed by*

other actors, centre door. As they do so another outburst of applause is heard. They run out again, trying to drag the Manager out with them—failing to take him—they cry out to the Author who also escapes.)

Mr. Fulton.

(To the Actors.) No—no—not now. After the second act.

(They exit and re-enter three times. Lot of stage hands come in at the centre door with scenery and other paraphernalia.)

Leading Lady.

(To MR. FULTON.) Mr. Fulton, there is no change in costume for the next act. Tell the orchestra to play a popular waltz.

Mr. Fulton.

I am very sorry—that is against my rules.

Leading Man.

(To himself.) Oh, damn your rules!

Robert.

Rules are only made to be broken. Give them freedom, and they will play the second act with more pleasure.

(MR. FULTON goes to the speaking-tube and tells the leader to play a waltz. LEADING LADY asks ROBERT to dance with her, and there is a general merriment in which the other actors join, while the stage hands continue to carry scenery in and out, preparing for the next act. A boy hands a card to MR. FULTON, which he passes over to ROBERT.)

Mr. Fulton.

(To ROBERT.) I think that they are some friends of yours, Robert.

Robert.

(To boy.) Show them in, Tom.

(Music stops and all the actors disperse in different directions. Boy goes out and returns with MR. MOELNER and his two daughters.)

Robert.

Hello, uncle. *(Shakes hands with him, also with his cousins.)*

The two young ladies are in evening dress.) How do you like the play?

Mr. Moelner.

It was very good, Robert

Lucy.

Robert, truly, I never believed that you were capable of doing such work.

Lena.

I never thought that your writings would appeal to so fashionable and literary an audience.

Robert.

You people never believed that I was capable of doing anything.

Mr. Moelner.

Of course, you cannot judge the success of a play by the first act—but so far, so good.

Robert.

If they like my first act, they will like the second, which is better still.

Lena.

It is strange. But the greatest applause and enthusiasm came from the top.

Robert.

That is just what I wanted. They are the real critics. Downstairs they will look at each other and say, "It is clever." On the first floor, they will perhaps say, "It is good," and give a little encouragement; but on the top, if it is good and they like it, they will applaud until their strength gives out; and if you happen to sit near one of them, he may offer you some of his peanuts and tell you that it is a hell of a good play—it's "*all right*."

(Enter PROF. POWERS, followed by MRS. and MISS POWERS, left door.)

Robert.

Professor, let me introduce to you my uncle, Mr. Moelner. Uncle, this is Professor Powers, who has kindly consented to become my future father-in-law.

Mr. Moelner.

So, the Professor has consented. Why, this is a surprise to me.

Prof. Powers.

But, Robert is very deserving.

Mr. Moelner.

Yes, yes; I always liked him; he is in every respect all right, and he would be a very good fellow if it were not for his foolish writings.

Prof. Powers.

But, to-night, we all have enjoyed his play.

Mr. Moelner.

That is right (*musingly*). We have enjoyed it. I never thought of that—that Robert's writings might bring joy to others.

Robert.

Mrs. Powers, allow me to introduce to you my two cousins—(*turning to* MISS POWERS) and Miss Powers—your future cousins, the Misses Moelner.

Lucy.

Delighted—to meet our future cousin (*shakes hands with her*).

Lena.

(*To* ROBERT, *as she shakes hands also*.) Then you are entitled to double congratulations. The possible success of your play and your assured success with Miss Powers.

Miss Powers.

His success as a writer I never doubted—and in half an hour more the people will confirm it.

Lena.

The first act was pretty good.

Mrs. Powers.

And the second act is still better.

Lucy.

But a very decisive act, for upon it depends the failure or the success of the play.

Miss Powers.

Success beyond a doubt.

(ROBERT *walks up and down nervously, and then goes over to the* PROFESSOR *and his* UNCLE.)

Lena.

If it had not been for my father, Robert would never have been recognized as a writer.

Miss Powers.

I understand that your father objected to his writing.

Lucy.

He only said it—but in his heart he meant that he would like to see him succeed as a writer.

Miss Powers.

Oh, I see!—He objected to it so long as he doubted his success; had he been sure of that, he might, possibly, have had no objection.

Robert.

(*To the PROFESSOR.*) Did any of the critics drop any remarks about the first act.

Prof. Powers.

No—they generally reserve their opinions until the next morning—but the first-nighters seemed to like it.

Mr. Moelner.

The acting was very good, I think.

Robert.

Wait uncle, till the next act; there is where the opportunity for acting comes in.

Mr. Moelner.

I wish you luck, my boy. I am very much interested so far, and will be overjoyed if you succeed; for, truly speaking, I never believed you to have any capability for such work.

Prof. Powers.

Capability is one thing, but his persistent perseverance is what he deserves credit for, for the one is useless without the other.

(*A good many people are seen rushing out at centre door, and back again and a number of actors enter from the left and go out at the centre door, others standing waiting for their cues; clapping is heard, and one calls—“The act is up,” and they go out at left door—the visitors headed by PROFESSOR POWERS and MRS. POWERS make a rush to go out.*)

Miss Powers.

(*Aside to her mother as she goes.*) Mama, let me stay here. I want to watch the next act near Robert.

(*The PROFESSOR and MRS. POWERS exit at right door.*)

Robert.

(*Aside to his uncle.*) By the way, uncle, is my mother in your box.

Mr. Moelner.

No, but I am sure that she is somewhere in the audience. Have you not seen her here to-night?

Robert.

I have never seen her since that memorable day that she left the house.

Mr. Moelner.

You ought to go out and hunt her up.

Robert.

I will—as soon as this act is started.

Mr. Moelner.

Come Lucy. Come Lena.

(*LUCY and LENA peep out at the audience through the stage.*)

Lucy.

(*To her father.*) Oh, what a grand sight the different colors of the ladies' dresses make.

Lena.

Now, I can imagine why actors get stage-fright.

Lucy.

If so many eyes were staring at me at one time, I would be paralyzed with fright.

Lena.

Therefore, you are not an actress.

Lucy.

I am glad I am not an actress.

Mr. Moelner.

(*Aside to his daughters, pointing at ROBERT and MISS POWERS.*) What do you think of them?

Lucy.

I don't see anything *great* in *her*.

Lena.

She's odd.

Mr. Moelner.

He is odd—and she is odd. That makes two odds.

Lena.

(*To Lucy.*) Anyway, Lucy, he did not think you odd.

Lucy.

I don't care.

Lena.

Now, sister, you will have to be contented with that short, fat, little cloakmaker—Haynes.

Lucy.

And you will have to console yourself with that tall, slim, hungry, ugly-looking Doctor Mandel.

Lena.

Do you hear that, Papa?

Mr. Moelner.

Come now, stop your quarreling.

(*They go and offer congratulations to ROBERT and MISS POWERS and exit left door.*)

Miss Powers.

(*To ROBERT.*) Fear not, Robert; good fortune has been with us right along; it brought us together; it gave you a good manager and good actors, and it will take us over this dangerous point in safety.

Robert.

I wish it were all over; the suspense is terrible.

Miss Powers.

The jury will decide in our favor, and then the suspense will be over.

(*Laughter and then shrieks of laughter heard from the outside.*)

Miss Powers.

(*Raising her hands.*) Hear them laugh—hear them shriek.

Robert.

(*Excitedly.*) I knew it would come—knew it was bound to come. (*Spontaneous applause is heard.*)

(*They peep out on stage.*)

Robert.

The leading lady is playing grandly ; she deserves all the credit.

Miss Powers.

What a splendid scene that is !

Robert.

It is the strongest in the play.

(*Another outburst of applause is heard, with acclamations of approval. MR. FULTON rushes in right door.*)

Mr. Fulton.

(*To ROBERT.*) The play is a hit beyond a doubt. (*embraces him*) You are a success, indeed.

Robert.

You and your actors deserve the credit. I only wrote the play, but your actors bodied forth the characters and have given life and expression to my thoughts.

(*Another outburst of applause is heard from the outside.*)

Mr. Fulton.

(*To MISS POWERS—shaking hands.*) Miss Powers, our undertaking is a success, indeed. I never saw so enthusiastic a reception given of a play in all of my twenty-five years of experience. (*more applause is heard.*) You hear that. It is not only spontaneous, but it is enthusiastic and well-meant applause.

(*A few actors enter at the centre door.*)

First Actor.

(*To manager.*) It's a hit Mr. Fulton.

Second Actor.

It's a success, Mr. Fulton.

Third Actor.

Author, it's good.

Leading Lady.

I have never played to such an enthusiastic crowd in my life. They simply killed me with kindness. I couldn't speak a line without their interrupting me.

(A few actors are dispersed right and left, others come in, and some theatrical paraphernalia are distributed among them, after which they exit through the centre door.)

(ROBERT walks up and down the stage in a state of great nervous excitement.)

Miss Powers.

Why are you so nervous and excited, Robert, now that you see the play is a success beyond any doubt?

Robert.

What I see and hear to-night—was in my imagination for years. The realization makes me nervous. The pleasure to-night reminds me of all the six years of anxiety that I endured—hoping against hope—without a word of consolation from anyone. I remember the days of patient waiting—while the very same play that you have seen to-night was in the managers' hands—for weeks and months—and then returned with the usual "regrets" "I am sorry" &c. And it was so often repeated, that those "regrets" are fixed in my ears *for all time*—and I cannot realize that what I hear to-night actually is the realization of my hopes.—Is it true?

Miss Powers.

Yes, it is true, Robert—as true as my love.

(MISS POWERS puts her arms around ROBERT'S neck and overcome by her emotion weeps. He consoles her. Applause is heard—tremendous and continued—enthusiastic and prolonged. Actors rush in and out; they all cry to MR. FULTON: "MR. FULTON—it's a hit—Congratulations, MR. FULTON. It's a great hit.")

Miss Powers.

Robert—you had better come out from here. Come and sit in our box.

Robert.

You will excuse me, I must go look for my mother. She is somewhere in the audience.

(They exit left door. A voice is heard behind the scenes.)

Turn up the lights—no, no, I mean make the house dark.

Another Voice.

More light.—What do you sit there for—are you asleep?

(A few actors enter and having been given some paraphernalia, some of them go to the right and some of them to left.)

(Voices are heard behind the scenes, indicating great excitement; gunshots are heard on the stage; bell rings, and the curtain goes down amidst great applause.)

(Leading man and leading lady enter at the centre door; manager appears at the right door.)

Leading Man and Leading Lady.

(Together.) It's a great hit, Mr. Fulton.

Mr. Fulton.

I am proud of you, Miss Strong. It was the best work that I have ever seen you do.

Miss Strong.

You must thank the author. It was his line, that gave me inspiration.

Mr. Fulton.

(To leading man.) It was very good John. Very well done. I am proud of you.

(Uninterrupted applause indicates a call.)

Mr. Fulton.

It's a call.

(Leading man and lady, and one or two others go out.

Another call. Leading man and lady go out. A third call; MISS STRONG goes out alone.)

(Another outburst of applause.)

Miss Strong.

(Running in.) A call for you, Mr. Fulton.

Mr. Fulton.

Where is the author? Where is the author?

A Voice.

I just saw him go out.

Another Voice.

He must be among the audience.

Mr. Fulton.

(*To stage hand.*) Go look for him, Jim. Go and look for him, quick.—

Miss Strong.

Come, Mr. Fulton. You go out and show yourself.

(*MR. FULTON resists, trying to wait for ROBERT, but they push him out before them through the centre door. Applause subsides, and cries are heard from the house of*

Voices.

“Author—Author—Speech—Speech—Author—
(*They re-enter centre door.*)

Mr. Fulton.

Is the author here?

A Voice.

I can't find him. He is in the audience.

Another Voice.

He is coming. He is coming.

Mr. Fulton.

Where has he been?

Jim.

I found him in the street; walking without a hat.

A Voice.

The author is here.

(*ROBERT enters; they seize him and in spite of his resistance they push him out. Tremendous applause is heard, with cries of “Speech! Speech!” He re-enters with flowers, and is decorated by the manager with a wreath of laurel. The whole stage is crowded with members of*

the company and musicians. The musicians with instruments under their arms offer their congratulations. The voice of MRS. MOCKART is heard outside.

Mrs. Mockart.

(*At left door.*) Let me in! Let me in! He is my boy—my boy! He is my son—

Robert.

Let her in. It is my mother. Let her in, I say! She is my mother—my mother—

(*MRS. MOCKART enters left, and rushing to ROBERT falls weeping into his arms. MR. MOELNER and his daughters stand at the left of ROBERT. The PROFESSOR and his wife and EMILY stand at right. MRS. MOCKART takes EMILY by the hand; brings her over to ROBERT. They embrace as the curtain goes down.*)

THE END.

PART II

HIS PARTNER'S WIFE

HIS PARTNER'S WIFE

A PLAY

In Three Acts

36821

By *LEONARD LANDES*

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CHARACTERS.

- MR. JOHN BURNETT (*a retired New York merchant; age 55*).
MR. GEORGE BURNETT (*his son, senior partner of the firm of
Burnett & Lederman; age 31*).
MR. EMIL LEDERMAN (*junior partner of Burnett & Lederman;
age 36*).
DR. MORTON (*a New York physician; age 35*).
MR. RUSSELL (*a man of the world; age 40*).
MR. JOHN ALLEN (*a banker; age 50*).
MR. A. THOMPSON (*a New York banker; age 60*).
MR. H. BELLEW (*a representative of the National Bank; age 48*).
MR. F. KEEN (*representative of a wholesale Dry Goods firm;
age 50*).
MR. FERGUSON (*manager firm Burnett & Lederman; age 58*).
SERVANT (*Male*).
MRS. LOUISE BURNETT (*wife of George Burnett; age 29*).
MRS. ARLINGTON (*a friend of the Burnetts; age 49*).
MISS JULIA ARLINGTON (*her daughter; age 19*).
MRS. CLARK (*a widow; age 34*).
EVELYN BURNETT (*a daughter of John Burnett; age 24*).

Place: NEW YORK.

Time: During the winter of 188—.

Action of the play occurs during the space of a few weeks.

FIRST ACT.

HOUSE OF MR. GEO. BURNETT, JR., WEST 72D ST. DRAWING
ROOM. DECEMBER.

SECOND ACT.

RECEPTION ROOM. MR. GEO. BURNETT, JR.'S HOUSE. TWO
WEEKS LATER.

THIRD ACT.

LIBRARY. MR. GEO. BURNETT, JR.'S HOUSE. ONE WEEK LATER.

ACT FIRST.

Drawing room of MRS. BURNETT, JR's house. Luxuriously furnished and brilliantly lighted. At rise of curtain, music is heard. Guests are seen to move to and fro in the rear. MRS. BURNETT, a woman of twenty-nine years—rather tall, brunette, refined, handsome, of stately commanding presence, enters quickly C. left followed by MR. RUSSELL, C. right.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Indignant.*) Why will you persist in following me, Mr. Russell? (MR. RUSSELL, *silent.*) Everyone is noticing it. (*Pause.*)

Mr. Russell

Don't you care to dance, Mrs. Burnett?

Mrs. Burnett

(*Pleasantly.*) No.—

Mr. Russell

The music is so inviting.—

Mrs. Burnett

I don't care to dance—thank you.

Mr. Russell

But you would care to dance if Mr. Lederman asked you.

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Lederman is my husband's partner—and, besides, I am at liberty to dance with whom I please, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell

Certainly—but you will not dance with me?

Mrs. Burnett

(*Emphatically.*) No—!

Mr. Russell

(*With force.*) Then I will follow you.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Astonished.*) Really—you are making yourself very obnoxious.

Mr. Russell

Indeed—but, if you will remember, there was a time when you considered your entertainments incomplete without my presence—have you forgotten *that* time?

Mrs. Burnett

Ah!—that was a long time ago.

Mr. Russell

It was only last winter.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Emphatically—shaking her head.*) I do not remember.

Mr. Russell

Do you remember the summer we first met—when we used to sit in a secluded corner of the piazza admiring the mountains—counting the stars until after midnight—and if I failed to call on you one single evening, the next day I was overwhelmed with messages—telegrams—and—

Mrs. Burnett

Why refer to that foolishness now?

Mr. Russell

Because you used the word obnoxious.

Mrs. Burnett

(*In a quiet tone—after slight pause.*) I admit we were friends once—but you cannot force me to continue our friendship—Time passes—things change.

Mr. Russell

Of course they have changed—especially since Mr. Lederman became your idol.

Mr. Burnett

(*Indignant.*) How dare you say that! (MR. RUSSELL *laughs and walks around the room.*) Mr. Russell, you had the impertinence to come here this evening without being invited.

Mr. Russell

(*Insolently.*) Yes!—I was not invited—that is just the reason ~~why~~ I came.

Mrs. Burnett

Now I ask you to leave at once or I will tell Mr. Burnett—and you know well he is not a man to be played with.

Mr. Russell

(*With gesture of scorn.*) Go and tell him if you please—and your party will then end in a scandal.

Mrs. Burnett

You can't frighten me.

Mr. Russell

I don't want to frighten you—but you know well I can—with a few words open the eyes of the world.

Mrs. Burnett

And with a few words I can bring to a close your impertinence—besides—who would believe your unsupported statement?

Mr. Russell

I have something that will corroborate my words.

Mrs. Burnett

You would not dare.

Mr. Russell

Ah, my dear, you do not know what a man will do when he is cast aside for no cause whatever.

Mrs. Burnett

There is no cause, and that's all there is about it, and if you think you can force me to continue our friendship you will be greatly mistaken. (*Leaves the room with defiant air; as she is about to exit at the center right, MRS. CLARK and MRS. ARLINGTON enter C. left. When MRS. BURNETT sees them she re-enters and advances towards MRS. ARLINGTON.*) Mrs. Arlington, you are interested in the children's hospital, I believe?

Mrs. Arlington

Yes—very much.

Mrs. Burnett

I have just told Mr. Russell that I propose to send the flowers with which I decorated my house to the hospital to-morrow.

Mrs. Arlington.

That's very kind of you.

Mrs. Burnett

I shall also send my yearly contribution at the same time.

Mrs. Arlington

Thank you, ever so much.

(MRS. CLARK *perceives* MR. RUSSELL, and goes towards him.)

Mrs. Clark.

Ah! Mr. Russell, so late.

Mr. Russell

It is better late than never, Mrs. Clark.

Mrs. Clark

But we missed an after-dinner talk—which is always so amusing.

Mr. Russell

Was Mr. Lederman not there?

Mrs. Clark

Yes—and he appeared to be Mrs. Burnett's most favored guest.

(MRS. ARLINGTON *perceives* MR. RUSSELL.)

Mrs. Arlington

Ah, Mr. Russell—where have you been? We missed your interesting stories this evening.

Mrs. Clark

Really, your absence was felt.

Mr. Russell

Oh—my absence was compensated for by Mr. Lederman's presence. (*Turning toward* MRS. BURNETT.) Is not that so, Mrs. Burnett?

Mrs. Burnett

(*Speaking sharply.*) I don't understand you, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell

(*Stammering.*) I mean to say—I am very sorry I was so late, for I had a new story to tell which I think would have interested you all.

Mrs. Clark

You may yet have an opportunity to tell it this evening.

Mr. Russell

I will not (*Laughingly*).

Mrs. Clark

Why not, Mr. Russell?

Mr. Russell

The story is too allegoric—I fear no one would understand me.

(*Laughter.* MRS. BURNETT *laughs in artificial and forced tone.* MESDAMES CLARK and ARLINGTON *seat themselves upon sofa.* MRS. BURNETT *goes up to MR. RUSSELL—pinches his arm spitefully—takes his arm and exits C. L.*)

Mrs. Clark

(*Gazing after MRS. BURNETT.*) Is she not beautiful?

Mrs. Arlington

Yes, she is a beautiful woman.

Mrs. Clark

There's no doubt she's a very clever woman.

Mrs. Arlington

And a very charitable one—and so refined.

Mrs. Clark

And yet they say her mother was only a music-hall dancer.

Mrs. Arlington

(*Astonished.*) But, Mrs. Burnett was no dancer. She had the best education that wealth could provide, and her father was of an excellent family.

Mrs. Clark

That is true—but her father made a mistake in his life for which his family suffers and may suffer for generations yet to come.

Mrs. Arlington

And what was that unpardonable mistake?

Mrs. Clark

The story goes that when he was quite young he visited Paris ; there he met and became infatuated with a French danseuse and returned to America with her as his wife. His family made the best of the matter and received her cordially, but she disgraced them—squandered his wealth—drove him to an early grave, and, finally, her mother ended her days in an asylum.

(*While MRS. CLARK is speaking MRS. ARLINGTON makes gestures of protest.*)

(*Sarcastically.*) Mrs. Burnett is a daughter of this dancer.

Mrs. Arlington

It is very sad, but Mrs. Burnett cannot be blamed. She was not consulted, nor could she choose who her father and mother should be.

Mrs. Clark

No, of course not—but she resembles her mother in appearance and manners.

Mrs. Arlington

Well, what of that?

Mrs. Clark

Oh, nothing ! nothing ! (*In a different tone.*) Mr. Russell has some new stories to tell and there are queer rumors afloat. (*MRS. ARLINGTON looks at MRS. CLARK scornfully.*) But what of that. Mr. Burnett is as much in love with her as if they had been married five weeks instead of five years, and, after all, it is nobody's business but their own.

Mrs. Arlington

It is peculiar, Mrs. Clark, that you seem to know everything.

Mrs. Clark

Yes, I take a slight interest in everything.

Mrs. Arlington

At the present day it is a waste of time to take an interest in anything. (*Rises.*)

(*MR. LEDERMAN and MISS JULIA ARLINGTON enter from C. left.*)

Mrs. Clark

(*Rising from sofa.*) Mr. Lederman, will you escort me to Mrs. Burnett?

Mr. Lederman.

Certainly. (MRS. CLARK takes MR. LEDERMAN'S arm and they exit C. L.)

Mrs. Arlington

Julia, has Dr. Morton improved in dancing?

Julia

Yes, Mamma.

Mrs. Arlington

And how many times did he dance with you?

Julia

Not even once.

Mrs. Arlington

(*Surprised.*) Not even once?

Julia

(*With a sigh.*) No—he speaks to me—but dances with others.

Mrs. Arlington

You were quarreling?

Julia

No—yes—no—that is, he wrote me a letter the other day which I did not like, and, therefore, I have not answered it—

Mrs. Arlington

I thought so. You are like your friend Evelyn; the moment a young man shows you any attention that's the end of it. (*Earnestly.*) Julia, such men as Dr. Morton are not to be found every day.

Julia

Sh! Mamma! Mr. Burnett and Evelyn are coming.

(MR. BURNETT, SR., and EVELYN enter from R. D.)

Mrs. Arlington

Just the person I want to see. Evelyn, why are you always around your father?

Evelyn

I suppose it's because I have only one father.

Mrs. Arlington

But, in an affair of this kind, you owe a certain duty to the young man.

Evelyn

(*Laughingly.*) I believe you envy me my father's society.

Mrs. Arlington

You misjudge me ; but it vexes me to see you tantalize such a noble fellow as Mr. Lederman

Evelyn

I don't think that I tantalize him.

Mrs. Arlington

After dinner you deserted the poor fellow, and—

Evelyn

Mrs. Arlington, please, I don't care to—

(EVELYN *crosses over to* JULIA. MR. BURNETT *approaches* MRS. ARLINGTON)

Mr. Burnett

It is not her fault. My George is the cause of it all. For some unknown reasons he dislikes Mr. Lederman and endeavors to prejudice her against him. She heeds him rather than me.

Mrs. Arlington

That's too bad. (*Calling, sharply.*) Evelyn !

(EVELYN *approaches.*)

Mrs. Arlington

I have known Robert Lederman for years. He is a remarkable man in every respect. Listen to your father and to me.

Evelyn

I am in no haste. I have time to wait.

Mrs. Arlington

My dear, if you wait too long you may fall asleep.

Evelyn

(*Laughingly.*) I will take care that shall not be the case with me.

Mrs. Arlington

Be careful, as I have known many people to fall asleep while they thought they were wide awake.

Evelyn

Have you not a personal motive in giving me this advice?

Mrs. Arlington

None that will harm you.

(MRS. BURNETT and MRS. ARLINGTON *exit C. right.*)

Julia

Take my mother's advice—everybody knows your brother George has a grudge against Lederman—and for that matter against anybody who has more brains than he.

Evelyn

You are not certain that my brother is totally wrong, and your mother is right.

Julia

No. (*Long pause.*) I have a letter from Dr. Morton which I would like you to read. He mentions your name several times, and as I cannot understand what he means, will you please read it for me.

Evelyn

Why, certainly. (JULIA *hands* EVELYN *the letter.* EVELYN *is in deep thought and suddenly asks:*) With whom has Mr. Lederman danced?

Julia

Once with me—but Mrs. Clark has just secured him for a partner.

Evelyn

Mrs. Clark? What is Mrs. Clark?

Julia

A widow with a quarter of a million.

Evelyn

Umph! Let's read the letter.

(*They seat themselves upon the sofa. EVELYN reads.*)

Evelyn

(*Reading.*) My dear Miss Arlington—(*drops hand holding letter to her side.*) Has Mr. Lederman danced with Mrs. Burnett?

Julia

No.

Evelyn

Have you noticed if he was anxious to dance with her?

Julia

I have noticed that he is avoiding her.

Evelyn

Avoids her? Just have an eye on him and see if you are right?

Julia

Evelyn, you do him a great injustice.

(*LEDERMAN enters quickly C. L.; EVELYN, as soon as she sees him, throws letter back of sofa—JULIA rises and goes to the right; EVELYN sits on center of sofa—then looks towards MR. LEDERMAN and moves towards the left. He takes the hint and goes and sits near her.*)

(*JULIA goes slowly and noiselessly and gets letter from back of the sofa.*)

Evelyn

Mr. Lederman, I am a new woman.

Lederman

(*Smiling.*) Yes. (*Looks cautiously around room.*) It does not matter. To me all women are perfect. Especially she whom I love.

Evelyn

How nice. (*Rises from sofa. JULIA shows her the letter—they laugh and leave the room C. L. LEDERMAN looks after them with puzzled air. MRS. BURNETT enter C. R.—LEDERMAN sighing deeply.*)

Mrs. Burnett

You sigh as though you were in love.

Lederman

So I am, but, unfortunately, my love is not returned.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Laughs.*) I don't know about that. Why have you returned all my letters?

Lederman

(*Emphatically.*) Your letters I will certainly return—always. Mrs. Burnett.

Mrs. Burnett

(*With downcast eyes.*) Why are you frightened at a letter from a woman?

Lederman

Oh, no, no! but you are the wife of my partner and friend.

(*He starts to leave the room.*)

Mrs. Burnett

(*Calling after him.*) Mr. Lederman, did you receive a letter from me to-day?

Lederman

Yes, but I haven't opened it.

Mrs. Burnett

It's only an invitation for an afternoon tea. (LEDERMAN *is silent.* —MRS. BURNETT *looks beseechingly into his eyes.*) Mr. Lederman, surely you will come?

Lederman

I am sorry, but I have a business engagement.

Mrs. Burnett

Then come later—but only come. (LEDERMAN *silent.*) Say that you will come and I will turn the very air of my house into perfume.

Lederman

No, I will not come. Pardon me—(*He again starts to leave* MRS. BURNETT—*she detains him by grasping his arm.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Really, you are a mysterious man.

Lederman

And you a mysterious woman.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Changing the subject.*) Have you enjoyed yourself this evening?

Lederman

Yes, very much.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Laughing.*) Mr. Lederman, will you dance with me?

(MR. GEORGE BURNETT *enters C. R. E.*)

Lederman

Perhaps Mr. Burnett has come to ask you for a dance.

George

(*To LEDERMAN.*) I prefer that she should not dance.

Lederman

(*With a bow.*) Pardon me.—(*Exit C. L.*)

George

You seemed startled when I entered.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Constrainedly.*) Oh no, what an idea!

George

(*Looking after LEDERMAN, C. L.*) He is a man who if given an inch of encouragement by a woman will take an ell of liberty.

Mrs. Burnett

What are you talking about?

George

What did he say to you?

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Lederman is a gentleman and always speaks as a gentleman should.

George

Let him be careful if he doesn't— (*Pause—in different tone.*) It surprises me that he is here this evening.

Mrs. Burnett

I invited him and shall do so whenever I choose.

George

I have special reasons why he should not be invited.

Mrs. Burnett

Your father insists I should invite him.

George

Louisa, my father has nothing to say here. It is always a good policy not to be socially intimate with people with whom one has business dealings.

Mrs. Burnett

He was always invited since I have known you—why this sudden change?

George

(*Sharply.*) That's my affair.

(BURNETT, SR., *enters R. D.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Excuse me, I must see that the punch is served. (*Exit R. D.*)

Burnett, Sr.

I suppose this evening's costly entertainment has for its object to surpass all of those of your friends.

George

What of that? I can afford to do so.

Burnett, Sr.

You cannot—and if you continue in this style I predict you will soon be a bankrupt.

George

Oh, father, please don't meddle with my affairs.

Burnett, Sr.

I shouldn't were I convinced you were doing right, but I hear you are speculating with the firm's money. (GEORGE *silent.*) Lederman knows it and has hinted to me that he does not like it.

George

(*Sneeringly.*) Such impertinence! But just what may be expected from an errand boy promoted to a junior partnership.

Burnett, Sr.

Whatever he was, he has as much interest in the firm to-day as you have; and let me tell you, it's to the work of this errand boy that we owe our Western and Southern trade. Had I not taken him into the firm he would have started a business of his own and taken away all of our trade.

George

Father, let's drop the matter. This is neither the time nor the place for such a talk.

Burnett, Sr.

Very well— (*Pause.*)

George

I will show you that in six months from to-day the firm will exist without Lederman.

Burnett, Sr.

That will never be as long as I live. (*Pause.*) In the start you went along together nicely. The trouble lies now in that you have a swelled head and you want Lederman to follow your tactics; but he knows more about the business than you will know in all your life, and, if you cannot agree with him, I will enter the firm again.

George

I know your motive—Evelyn!—but that will never be.

Burnett, Sr.

I don't know about that.

George

Father, you don't know this man's private character; you know him only in business; you will soon see him in his true color. If my suspicions should prove correct I will show him no mercy. He shall be disgraced before everybody.

Burnett, Sr.

What nonsense are you talking?

(Two male servants enter D. R. They wear black plush knee breeches, black silk stockings, gilt garters, bring in punch bowl, etc., to serve punch.)

(Music ceases—laughter and voices are heard and guests enter through R. C. and L. C. doors; DR. MORTON, JULIA and

EVELYN, and MR. RUSSELL, MRS ARLINGTON and
MRS. CLARK *following*.—*Punch is served.*)

Mrs. Clark

Come, Mr. Russell, tell us something.

Mr. Russell

I told you all the stories I knew.

Mrs. Arlington

Mr. Russell, tell us a story—a true story.

Everybody

A story, Mr. Russell, a story

A Gentleman

We must appoint Mr. Russell our official story-teller.

Mr. Russell

(In the center of room holding glass of punch in hand—addressing himself to everybody—loudly.) When I was in South Africa, I heard of a liquid the Zulus have—*(looking at his punch.)* It looks just like this punch and has the virtue of discovering a criminal.

Lederman

That's interesting, if true.

Burnett, Sr.

It would save us much trouble and expense if we had such a liquid.

Mr. Russell

When any one is suspected of a crime, and there is no proof of his guilt,—let us say, for example, a wife is accused of faithlessness,—this punch is given her to drink. If she is innocent, the liquid is harmless; if she be guilty, it causes her great agony and puts her to torture. At the least sign of pain or suffering, the public assembled cry out that she is guilty, and the woman is condemned to death.

Mrs. Burnett

How cowardly!

Mr. Russell

No—it's a very good idea.

Burnett, Sr.

A very good idea indeed—but so barbarous.

(Laughter.)

Dr. Morton

Suppose, Mr. Russell, this Zulu punch, if I may so call it, is given to a person who is not accused of a crime at all, and it causes him torture.

Mr. Russell

But it doesn't, Dr. Morton ; it's strange, but it's a fact.

Dr. Morton

But suppose it does—

Mr. Russell

Then the person is guilty of a crime and is so condemned by the public.

Burnett, Sr.

How many fools constitute a public in Zululand ?

Mr. Russell

I don't know—you must ask the English that question.

Mrs. Burnett

I would like to know if Mr. Russell drank any of this magic fluid himself.

Mr. Russell

No—I only heard of it.

Mrs. Burnett

(Sneeringly.) What a pity !

(General laughter.)

Dr. Morton

My opinion of this punch-colored mixture is that it is harmless, but in case they desire to condemn a man, poison is put into it—some poison which causes intense pain. If it is their desire to proclaim him innocent, they do not drug the mixture, just as in our country, when certain unscrupulous men wish to condemn others, they invent a mixture of lies—but a mixture of lies is harmless.

Mr. Russell

I am going to tell you something more interesting and which I saw with my own eyes. When I was in India, in the city of

Calcutta, I with two friends—one a German and the other an English merchant. At a fair we met an Indian magician. Our English friend begged him to show us an example of his wonderful power. The magician asked him what he most desired to see. He answered a glimpse of his home. The magician, after pondering a while, asked for some small sticks and colored handkerchiefs. These being given him, he beckoned to us to follow him to a distant field. There he drove the sticks into the ground—placed a handkerchief upon them, and in a moment, in some mysterious way, there arose a large tree upon the spot. My English friend turned pale, began to tremble and cried out: "Don't you see! Don't you see!" We replied that we saw a tree but he became more violent, crying: "Can't you see that coward? Don't you see anything but the tree?" We answered we could see nothing but the tree. Then he began to laugh in an hysterical manner. "Look—look—can't you see a woman sitting near the tree? That is my wife. And you see a man by her side holding her hand? That is the man whom I made what he is. The coward wants to destroy my home. Open the windows! Open the doors!" he cried, "let in some fresh air. Don't you smell the poisonous gas that surrounds them," and with these words he fell into a faint from which he did not recover for three hours.

(An impressive silence follows.)

George

Father, what does he mean?

Burnett, Sr.

He means nothing. Don't you see he's less than a fool.

Mr. Russell

Another remarkable thing about this tree was that its leaves were so large that a carriage and a pair of horses could go under each.

Burnett, Sr.

(Sarcastically.) And how high was the tree, Mr. Russell?

Mr. Russell

(Confused and stammering.)—t-w-o—two feet.

Everybody

(With incredulous surprise.) Two feet?

Mr. Russell

(*More confused.*) No—no—twelve feet.

Everybody

(*Same action and laughing.*) Twelve feet?

Mr. Russell

(*In desperation.*) No—no—two thousand feet.

(*Prolonged laughter and jeers from everybody.*)

(*MRS. CLARK pulls MR. RUSSELL'S sleeve and he drops the glass of punch to the floor.*)

Burnett, Sr.

(*Laughingly.*) Friends, you know our tongues are situated in a moist place, and, therefore, likely to slip, so we must forgive Mr. Russell for his slippery tongue. (*Laughter.*)

(*Guests leave the room to the R. and L. —MR. RUSSELL remains standing upon the spot where he dropped the glass.*)

George

Mr. Russell, you must go around the world again and see if you can't find something that will make a wise man out of a fool.

Mr. Russell

We sometimes play the fool to make another man wise.—(*Quickly.*) I would advise you to go around the world and see if you can find something that will make a blind man see.

(*Exit GEORGE.*)

(*MR. RUSSELL approaches the punch bowl and helps himself to glass after glass of punch—drinks quickly, one glass after another, sighs deeply.—MRS. BURNETT re-enters the room.*)

Mrs. Burnett

You have succeeded admirably in making yourself the laughing stock of all my guests.

Mr. Russell

I'm not so sure of that.

Mrs. Burnett

Why everyone laughed at you.

Mr. Russell

Only apparently. They understood what I meant.

Mrs. Burnett

They clearly understood that you were either a fool or a knave.

Mr. Russell

Perhaps they did—but they will change their minds when I have an opportunity to give the sequel of my story.

Mrs. Burnett

That you will never have. I opened everybody's door for you. I shall now see that they are closed—and very tightly too.

(MR. RUSSELL *laughs—walks about the room.—Pause.*)

Mr. Russell

Be careful that the doors are not closed to you as well.

(MRS. BURNETT *remains standing in deep thought. A SERVANT enters to remove the tray, etc.*)

Mrs. Burnett

John!

Servant

Yes, madam.

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Russell's hat and coat.

Servant

Yes, madam. (*Exits.*)

(MR. RUSSELL and MRS. BURNETT *look at each other in silence. SERVANT reappears with MR. RUSSELL'S hat and coat. RUSSELL bows courteously to MRS. BURNETT and exits R. C. MRS. BURNETT exits R. D. Room remains empty for a minute—music is again heard. MR. LEDERMAN and EVELYN enter C. L.*)

Lederman

Will you have some punch, Miss Burnett?

Evelyn

Yes. (EVELYN *seats herself on sofa and MR. LEDERMAN hands her a glass of punch. She drinks it.*) Was not Mr. Russell's story this evening rather queer?

Lederman

It is the greatest inventive lie I have ever heard, and if a lie has any weight he could kill all India with it. (*Both laugh.*)

Evelyn

But there was such a depth of sincerity in his narration.

Lederman

Yes, that's just the point. He reminds me of the hero of your story, the Captain Knight, whom you describe as having such blood-curdling adventures in South America, and who, as it was afterwards proved, had never been more than a hundred miles from his native town. (*Both laugh.*) If I had any ability to write, I would take Mr. Russell with his lie story and make another lie story out of it. (*EVELYN laughs heartily.*)

Evelyn

That's a good suggestion; there is enough material. I am surprised that you remember the hero of my story.

Lederman

(*Sentimentally.*) Would you not have been more surprised could I have forgotten it?

Evelyn

Oh, I—

Lederman

I know it almost by heart and I bought a copy of every new edition.

Evelyn

(*Laughingly.*) Then you are well supplied with waste paper.

(*JULIA ARLINGTON enters from C. R. E., but upon discovering EVELYN and Mr. LEDERMAN she retreats.*)

(*Anticipating JULIA'S intention to withdraw.*) What is it, Julia? Come in.

Julia

Your brother George wants to see you.

Evelyn

Very well.

(*JULIA exits L. C. EVELYN remains a few moments in deep thought; rises.*)

Pardon me, Mr. Lederman—

(*As she reaches the door she notes LEDERMAN'S air of dejection.*)

tion, and taking from her bouquet at her belt a rose, returns and offers it to him. LEDERMAN gazes at her with rapture.)

Lederman

I know exactly what your brother wishes to say to you.

Evelyn

(Laughingly.) Really, I did not know that you were a mind-reader.

Lederman

However.—I will bid you good night.

Evelyn

Oh, no,—you are not going—?

Lederman

Do you want me to stay?

(She looks at him. After a long pause she takes the whole bouquet of roses from her belt, thrusts it into his hands and leaves the room R. C. LEDERMAN sighs deeply, and helps himself to more punch. MRS. BURNETT enters from the right; sees LEDERMAN; she gives a start of pleasure. After looking cautiously around, to see if they are entirely alone, she approaches LEDERMAN, who has his back towards her, and slips one of her hands into one of his. Takes quickly a glass of punch.)

Mrs. Burnett

(Triumphantly.) To the health of Mr. Robert Lederman.

(Lederman looks at her with mingled astonishment and disgust and starts to leave. She holds him back.)

Mrs. Burnett

You must drink a glass to my health.

(EVELYN enters the room, and when she sees MRS. BURNETT and LEDERMAN, she retreats. LEDERMAN drinks punch to satisfy MRS. BURNETT and then starts to go again. As he is about to go she makes motion as if to embrace him. He seizes her by both arms and violently throws her from him upon the sofa.)

Lederman

Madam you are drunk with passion.

(Exits quickly R. C. When he throws MRS. BURNETT from him, one of his cuffs is lost and falls under the sofa. EVELYN enters and remains standing like a statue and looks at MRS. BURNETT in silence. GEORGE enters and seeing his wife upon the sofa runs to her.)

George

What has happened to you, my dear?

(MRS. BURNETT is silent—seeing his sister.)

George

What has happened here, Evelyn? *(She trembles, but gives no reply. GEORGE rushes to C. door. Calling, C.)* Dr. Morton! Dr. Morton!

(DR. MORTON enters hurriedly, followed by a few guests. DR. MORTON goes toward MRS. BURNETT.)

Dr. Morton.

Some water—some water. There is no danger; it's nothing.

George

(To EVELYN.) What has happened here? Who was here? *(Harshly.)* Why don't you speak? *(He glances keenly about the room and as he is about to go to MRS. BURNETT he discovers the cuff. Picks it up and examines it—looks towards the sofa and an expression of comprehension lights up his face. LEDERMAN enters R. C. Addressing LEDERMAN—in low tone.)* Is this your cuff, Mr. Lederman?

(LEDERMAN is astonished, looks at both of his hands and finds one cuff gone.)

Lederman

Yes—*(attempts to take the cuff from GEORGE, who refuses to let him have it).*

George

(In a low tone.) Will you tell me what happened in this room before you left?

(LEDERMAN remains silent and in the same posture.)

(Loudly.) Will you answer my question?

(There is a stir among the guests and all look around.)

Burnett, Sr.

(*To GEORGE, in a whisper.*) Control yourself, George ; control yourself—make no scandal.

George

(*Excitedly.*) Will you answer my question?

Burnett, Sr.

(*To GEORGE.*) Remember he is your guest ; society will never forgive you for this.

(*GEORGE laughs hysterically—then, turning to the guests holds out the cuff.*)

(*In a very excited manner.*) Here, friends, is the evidence o how he has abused my hospitality. All that he possesses he owes to my father and this is the reward. But what (*with a sneer*) can you expect of a man who was brought up on Avenue A. Such a creature should be kicked out from decent society. (*Throws cuff, with force at LEDERMAN'S face.*)

(*While GEORGE speaks MRS. BURNETT cries out several times "GEORGE ! GEORGE !"*)

(*Curtain falls as guests are seen running out in different directions.*)

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT SECOND.

(*Reception room of MR. BURNETT, JR.'S house—handsomely furnished; doors C., L. and R. Piano on corner of right. At rise, GEORGE is discovered walking up and down the room nervously. SERVANT enters L.*)

Servant

Mr. Burnett, Mr. Ferguson would like to see you.

(*Telephone heard ringing.*)

George

John, answer the telephone. (SERVANT goes to telephone.)

George

Who is it?

Servant

From the office.

George

Wait before you answer. Tell me all about it.

Servant

They inquire if you are at home.

George

(*Excitedly.*) Say—no—say—no— What do they want?

Servant

They want to know if Mr. Ferguson called to-day to see you.

George

Say no.

Servant

(*Earnestly.*) Mr. Burnett, Mr. Ferguson called five times when you were out.

George

Do as I tell you, you fool.

Servant

You are wanted at the office on important business.

George

Yes—yes—I know.

(*SERVANT re-enters room.*)

Send Mr. Ferguson up.

(*Exit SERVANT L.*)

(*MR. FERGUSON enters L.*)

George

(*Anxiously.*) Anything serious, Mr. Ferguson?

Ferguson

Serious enough—Mr. Lederman sent away the man you employed to examine the books—he has examined them personally.

George

Did you protest against it?

Ferguson

No—because he should not suspect anything. Something must be done at once, or everything will be known in a short time.

George

(*In a harsh tone.*) Did you have an interview with him this morning as I told you to?

Ferguson

Yes, but it is of no use. He is determined to go out of the firm — (*quietly*) or you must go out.

George

What's to be done!

Ferguson

Beg your father to interfere.

George

Yes—you are right—my father, certainly. I will see if he is home. (*GEORGE goes to telephone—speaking while at 'phone.*) Yes,—yes,—is that you, Evelyn—yes—is father home—do you know where he is—at the office with Lederman, you say—yes.—

Ferguson

(*From the room—eagerly.*) What does she say?

George

(*Still at the telephone.*) Yes—my wife will leave the city to-morrow—you will come to tea this afternoon—yes do—good-bye. (*Re-enters the room.*)

Ferguson

What did she say?

George

Lederman sent for my father to come to the office. (*Quietly.*)
On business of great importance.

Ferguson

Everything is lost. (*Sinks into chair.*)

(*GEORGE walks up and down the room nervously, then he suddenly stops as if an idea had come to him.*)

George

There's one thing you can do—that will be the best way for us both.

Ferguson

Well—what?

George

(*Quickly*) I have \$5,000 in the house—leave the city until I can arrange the matter.

Ferguson

Oh, no; I'm not made of such material. I was a fool in advancing you the firm's money, but I have done it with good intentions. I have done nothing to cause me to run away.

George

Be quiet—not so loud.

Ferguson

The guilty man should go—should run away—that would be proper; that would be right.

George

Sh! Sh! Some one is coming. Go to my room. I will be up in a minute and we will talk the matter over.

(*FERGUSON is about to speak when GEORGE interrupts him and takes him by the arm.*)

Ferguson

I have been twenty-five years with the firm; I have grown-up daughters; a reputation to lose. Please—

George

Yes, yes, I know.

(*Pushes him out of the room.*)

(*FERGUSON exits C. D. MRS. BURNETT enters R. D.*)

George

Louise, my sister Evelyn will come to tea this afternoon.

(MRS. BURNETT *takes no notice of remark.*)

Mrs. Burnett

You did not go to see Mr. Lederman?

George

No—and I'm not going to.

Mrs. Burnett

Why?

George

Because your explanation is unsatisfactory to me.

Mrs. Burnett

Unsatisfactory?

George

Yes—you seem to have a motive in shielding this man.

Mrs. Burnett

And you made up your mind to trample him under your feet ;—but see how everybody sympathizes with him—and to us nobody comes—no one invites us ; in the street no one even cares to recognize me.

George

This I don't understand myself ; but I don't care, and why should you care as long as I am standing by you?

Mrs. Burnett

But I do care. A man can't live all by himself.

George

Be patient—in time they will all come knocking for an entrance at our door.

Mrs. Burnett

But, if you would go and apologize, the firm will remain as it is and everything will be forgiven and forgotten.

George

I'm not going to make a fool of myself.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Emphatically.*) George, you have done the man a great injustice.

George

I have done him a good service. In the future he will know how to behave himself. (SERVANT *enters L. D.*)

Servant

Mrs. Burnett, Dr. Morton is here.

Mrs. Burnett

All right, John.

George

(*To MRS. BURNETT.*) I am busy upstairs—see that I am not disturbed.

(SERVANT *exits L. D.* and GEORGE *exits C. D.* DR. MORTON *enters L.*)

Dr. Morton

How are you to-day, Mrs. Burnett?

Mrs. Burnett

Much better, Doctor.

Dr. Morton

That's good—you look better.

Mrs. Burnett

Oh, I'm all right; only give me something to make me sleep, doctor.

Dr. Morton

I'll see what I can do. Let me feel your pulse. (*Pause.*) (*Feeling her pulse.*) That's all right.

Mrs. Burnett

Do you think I shall be able to leave to-morrow. (*Before he has an opportunity to answer.*) Please, doctor, don't say I can't go, because I shall go anyway.

Dr. Morton

That's all right. You can go but I must warn you of one thing. Avoid all excitement and mental occupation for it will be not only injurious but dangerous.

Mrs. Burnett

I will be careful, Doctor

Dr. Morton

I will see you to-morrow before you leave. (*He is about to leave the room.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Doctor! (*The Doctor stops.*) Could you spare a minute. I want to speak a few words to you.

Dr. Morton

Yes—certainly.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Pointing to chair and both take seats.*) Doctor, I know a lady (*In a different tone—*) one of those, you know, possessed of a very susceptible heart, as we say—would you call her a woman with a human weakness?

Dr. Morton

I really don't know what I would call her.

Mrs. Burnett

Is it a fact that we all have a weakness in some form or another?

Dr. Morton

Yes, to a certain extent—we all have a weakness in some form or another.

Mrs. Burnett

Now, doctor, is there a remedy by which we can control the weak spot that is in us?

Dr. Morton

Yes.

Mrs. Burnett

(*With delight.*) Yes? (*Pause.*) This lady is a dear friend of mine—would you prescribe something for her?

Dr. Morton

There is nothing to prescribe. The remedy is in ourselves and ready for use.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Surprised.*) In ourselves?

Dr. Morton

Yes. It is asserted we have something in ourselves and if we try we can control the weakness that is in us.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Laughingly.*) This something must be a very funny thing.

(*DR. MORTON rises.*)

Mrs. Burnett

(*With appreciating movement of hand.*) No, no, doctor, I did not quite understand what you meant.

Dr. Morton

(*Resuming seat.*) This something, as you call it, is our will-power, or, as our scientists call it, the double of us, and we can, by an effort, subdue the weakness that is in us.

Mrs. Burnett

In other words, you mean by effort we can control the devil that is in us?

Dr. Morton

Yes, exactly.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Softly.*) Ah, but, doctor, I have known people who have tried time and time again, but have failed.

Dr. Morton

It may be they have tried, but at the last moment they shrunk from the pain of effort

Mrs. Burnett

Then effort is their salvation?

Dr. Morton

(*Emphatically.*) Yes. Effort is their salvation.

(*They both rise as SERVANT enters L.*)

Servant

(*Announcing at door.*) Mrs. Clark and Mr. Russell.

(*MRS. CLARK and MR. RUSSELL enter L.*)

Mrs. Burnett

(*Sharply—to SERVANT on announcing.*) Who told you to show them up?

Mrs. Clark

(*Rapidly—not hearing MRS. BURNETT's rebuke to SERVANT.*)
How do you do, dear. Is it true what I read in the papers that you are going to leave us? I was driving through the neighborhood; I thought I would come in and see you.

Mrs. Burnett

That's very kind of you.

Mr. Russell

(*To MRS. BURNETT—aside.*) How do you do, Mrs. Burnett?
(*MRS. BURNETT remains silent.*) For old friendship's sake I came to bid you good-bye. (*Holds out hand and MRS. BURNETT walks away.*)

Mrs. Clark

(*Seeing DR. MORTON.*) Ah, Dr. Morton, permit me to congratulate you upon your engagement to Miss Arlington.

Dr. Morton

Thank you, Mrs. Clark.

Mrs. Clark

You are a very fortunate fellow to catch such a bright and sweet girl as Miss Arlington. (*Crosses to MR. RUSSELL. Aside to MR. RUSSELL.*) She's the most stupid and disagreeable person I have ever met.

Mr. Russell

(*To MRS. CLARK.*) You say Mrs. Burnett is leaving the city—where is she going to?

Mrs. Clark

To California. That is the best thing she can do, for no one will ever recognize her here.

Mr. Russell

What is she going to do there?

Mrs. Clark

Why—she has two sisters in California—one divorced and the other separated from her husband—and, besides, her father's family resided in San Francisco—some very nice people, you know.

(*MR. RUSSELL goes towards DR. MORTON.*)

Mr. Russell

Have you seen Mr. Lederman lately?

Dr. Morton

Yes, I saw him last night at the club.

Mr. Russell

When you see him again, tell him that if he ever wants to make love to a woman, he should do it in a dark tunnel about 200 miles long.

Dr. Morton

Um! (*Crosses over towards MRS. BURNETT.*)

(*EVELYN enters L. with a sad expression upon her face.*)

Mrs. Burnett

(*Going to EVELYN.*) How do you do? How do you do, dear—why so sad?

Evelyn

Oh, I'm all right. (*To DR. MORTON.*) How do you do, Doctor?

Dr. Morton

Very well. (*GEORGE re-enters room.*) I bid you all good afternoon.

Mrs. Burnett

Oh, Doctor, stay for a cup of tea.

Dr. Morton

I really cannot. Miss Arlington is waiting for me in my carriage.

Mrs. Burnett

Why not ask her up?

(*DR. MORTON hesitates.*)

George

Yes—ask her to come up.

Dr. Morton

Yes—I will. (*Exits L. D.*)

George

(*To EVELYN, aside.*) You said Lederman sent for father?

Evelyn

Yes.

George

It's strange that father went.

Evelyn

That's all right ; Mr. Lederman had dinner with us last night.

George

(*Surprised.*) Dinner last night ?

Evelyn

Yes, and he came on my invitation.

George

(*Astonished.*) At your invitation ?

(SERVANT enters with cups, etc., and commences to serve tea.)

Evelyn

(*Emphatically.*) Yes, on my invitation.

George

Evelyn, you are jesting.

Evelyn

No. It's real earnest.

George

I don't understand it.

Evelyn

You will—and very soon.

Mrs. Burnett

(*To EVELYN.*) Evelyn, will you have some tea ?

Evelyn

Yes, I will take a cup.

(MRS. BURNETT hands her a cup. DR. MORTON and MISS ARLINGTON enter.)

Mrs. Clark

(*To MISS ARLINGTON.*) Julia, allow me to congratulate you. Dr. Morton will surely some day become the leading physician of New York.

Miss Arlington

(*Smiling.*) Thank you.

(MRS. CLARK crosses room towards MR. RUSSELL.)

Mr. Russell

(*To MRS. CLARK—aside.*) You meant it's more likely he will be the leading doctor, not of New York, but of Hoboken.

Mrs. Clark

Exactly. He's the most typical educated fool that I have ever seen.

(*Everybody served with cups of tea.*)

Evelyn

(*Aloud.*) Mr. Russell, you remember the story you told us about the Indian magician?

Mr. Russell

Yes.

Evelyn

I'm going to take it as the main theme for a novel that I am going to write.

Mr. Russell

That's quite complimentary.

Evelyn

It would help me how to paint the characters if I knew whether the picture which the magician showed to the British merchant proved to be true.

Mr. Russell

Really, I have told you so many stories about India that I am afraid Mr. Burnett or (*Looking at MRS. BURNETT*) Mrs. Burnett might object.

Mrs. Burnett

No, Mr. Russell, you know I am interested in the Hindoos.

George

Go on, Mr. Russell, go on; your story interests me. (*Pause.*)

Evelyn

Well, Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell

(*Hesitatingly.*) The sport proved to be a very serious matter for our British friend. After he recovered from the shock he was never the same man again. He packed up his things and left for home at once. He promised faithfully to write, but he never did.

Evelyn

That's too bad.

Mr. Russell

I'll tell you another trick the magician has done that you can perhaps make use of in your novelette.

Evelyn

What is it, Mr. Russell?

Mr. Russell

In the meadow where we were standing a large wagon loaded with hay passed by, and there was a horse running about in the field. The magician caught the horse and, before our eyes, made it eat the whole wagon of hay. (*Laughter.*)

Mrs. Clark

(*Amazed.*) A horse eat a wagon load of hay?

Mr. Russell

I have heard of a magician who made a horse eat a ton of coal.

Mrs. Burnett

(*Sarcastically.*) Mr. Russell, did you ever hear of a magician who made a horse eat a wagon-load of American peanuts?

(*Laughter.*)

Mr. Russell

I don't believe they have peanuts in India. (*Laughingly.*) Perhaps chestnuts. (*Laughter.*)

Evelyn

I don't think I can make use of your hay story, Mr. Russell; but did you ever meet that British merchant after he left you in India?

Mr. Russell

Yes, about two years later I met him in London.

Evelyn

And did you ask him about the truth of the magician's revelation?

Mr. Russell

I did, but to all my questions he gave me some indirect answers.

Evelyn

For example, what did he say?

Mr. Russell

I really don't remember.

Evelyn

See if you can't remember something; try and remember something; it will help me a great deal.

(Everybody is watching for MR. RUSSELL's answers eagerly.)

Mr. Russell

Before we parted he told me that his home was destroyed.

Evelyn

And did he say that his friend was the cause of it?

Mr. Russell.

He said something, but really I don't remember.

Evelyn

Or did he perhaps say that his own wife was the cause of it?

Mr. Russell

Really, I don't remember. *(Silence prevails in the room.)*

(MRS. BURNETT sits suddenly on piano stool—striking keys with elbow, turns and begins to play an inharmonious tune—GEORGE stops her.)

Miss Arlington

(To DR. MORTON.) Come, let's go. Why did you bring me up here anyway?

Dr. Morton

(Aside.) For professional reasons.

Miss Arlington

(Indignantly.) Some day you will probably want me to drive your carriage for professional reasons. *(Goes towards EVELYN.)*

(MRS. CLARK and MR. RUSSELL exit L.)

George

(To DR. MORTON aside.) Doctor, see that my wife leaves to-morrow, will you?

Dr. Morton

That's all right. Try and send her with somebody. She looks

well, but she's a very sick woman, and if she does not follow the advice I gave her, something dangerous may happen.

George

I will see that everything is all right.

Miss Arlington

(*To EVELYN.*) Evelyn, will you not take a drive with us in the park?

Evelyn

Thank you. I have to remain here for a while.

Miss Arlington

Well, good afternoon to all.

(*DR. MORTON and MISS ARLINGTON exit L.*)

George

Evelyn, remain here a little while; I have some business upstairs. (*Exit C. D. A pause.*)

Evelyn

Louise, I am going to send to you the manuscript of the novelette that I have written based on the theme of Mr. Russell's tale, and I want you to read it carefully and then read it to George.

Mrs. Burnett

To George? Why to George? You know I'm going away to-morrow.

Evelyn

Suppose you don't go—(*in earnest*) You hear—suppose you don't go.

Mrs. Burnett

I'm going even if it rains with stones—if I remain here the air that surrounds me will suffocate me.

Evelyn

Do you mean the air that is polluted with the insult and injustice towards Mr. Lederman suffocates you?

(*MRS. BURNETT looks at her in a rather astonished manner.*)

Mrs. Burnett

I told your brother that he had done a great injustice to Lederman, but what can I do? He does not believe me.

Evelyn

Did you tell him the truth—and nothing but the truth?

Mrs. Burnett

Evelyn!

Evelyn

Had you told him the truth? Tell him the truth and he will believe you.

Mrs. Burnett

What do you mean?

Evelyn

If you will not tell him the truth—I will (*emphatically*) you understand—I will.

Mrs. Burnett

What do you mean by truth.—What truth?

Evelyn

It will be my duty to purify the air of my brother's home.

(*MRS. BURNETT remains stupefied. SERVANT enters L. and goes towards MRS. BURNETT.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Burnett is in his room.

Evelyn

Now, is it clear to you why nobody comes to see you? And Dr. Morton hesitated to bring up Miss Arlington? Do you imagine the world is blind? Sometimes the very stones have eyes and ears. You are ambitious and want to be honored and respected by your friends and neighbors, but if a man wants to wear a crown he must be a king—and if a woman wants to be a queen she must be pure.

(*MRS. BURNETT crosses towards the right and sits on sofa; she looks at EVELYN.*)

Evelyn

(*With emphasis.*) My brother must know the truth, then he can do as he likes—but the truth he must be told.

(*Prolonged pause.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Send me your manuscript. I will not leave to-morrow. (*Confused*) I will stay. I will not go.

(BURNETT, SR., *is heard outside. He, followed by MR. LEDERMAN, enter quickly L. E.*)

Burnett, Sr.

(*Excited.*) Where is he? Where is he? (*Runs about the room.*)

Evelyn

What has happened?

(BURNETT, SR., *when he sees EVELYN quiets down.*)

Burnett, Sr.

Nothing—nothing—

(MR. BURNETT, SR., *excitedly runs about the room, twitching his fingers nervously.*)

Where is he? Where is he? (*Turning towards MRS. BURNETT.*) Where is George?

(MRS. BURNETT *is like in a stupor—looks at him but gives him no answer.*)

Evelyn

Father, George is upstairs.

(MR. BURNETT, SR. *is about to run out of the room—EVELYN catches him by the arm.*)

Evelyn

Father, please tell me what has happened.

Burnett, Sr.

(*Angry.*) Go home! Go home! Leave us alone. What are you doing here anyway? (*Exit C. D.*)

(MR. LEDERMAN *is about to follow him when EVELYN takes hold of his arm.*)

Evelyn

What is the matter, Mr. Lederman?

Lederman

Some business trouble. (*Exit C.—pause.*)

(BURNETT, SR. *is heard outside saying:*)

Burnett, Sr.

You are a bankrupt and I told you before that you would be bankrupt.

Evelyn

(*Going towards and speaking to MRS. BURNETT—pointing with finger to C.*) You hear that voice? You hear how horrible it sounds. He is financially bankrupt—but you are morally bankrupt. (Exits L.)

(MRS. BURNETT remains sitting on sofa as if stupefied—looks towards EVELYN as she goes out—long silence.)

Mrs. Burnett

What do they want from me? What do they want from me? (*In a louder voice.*) Why do they not leave me alone? Has not every man a right to live as he pleases? (*She rises from sofa and disheveling her hair runs about the room as if mad.*) Oh, God! Oh, God! Why is this world so immovable? Why are people so unpardonable? Am I as bad as all that? (*Runs about the room again, flinging everything down before her—making a great noise. GEORGE enters quickly.*)

George

My God, Louise, what has happened to you?

MRS. BURNETT looks at him and composes herself—gives a little laugh—then falling on her knees with her head on a chair begins to weep bitterly.)

George

(*Going towards her.*) Louise, you act so strange. What has happened to you? Tell me—don't be afraid. I'll do anything you want me to.

(MRS. BURNETT wipes away tears and rises.)

Mrs. Burnett

Let's take a drive in the Park—in spite of everything—(*Louder*) In spite of everything. In spite of everybody.

George

In spite of whom?

Mrs. Burnett

Ask no questions. (*Takes him by the arm.*) Come, let's take a drive in the park.

George

But you can't go that way—you are not dressed. (*Going to door—calls.*) John—John—go quick for Doctor Morton.

(*MRS. BURNETT laughs.*)

Mrs. Burnett

That's so—that's so—I'm not dressed. Well, I'm going to dress.

(*She walks out through the room in a triumphant manner, laughing. MR. BURNETT follows her. As they go out the curtain falls.*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT THIRD.

(*A Winter's evening. The library of MR. BURNETT, JR.'S house. At the right fire burning in the grate. Large table with chairs at left. At the right a small desk with sheets of paper scattered over it. Staircase going up to another room. Large bookcase at back. At rise the piano is heard playing selections from "Orphee."*)

(*MRS. BURNETT enters from the right with sad and anxious expression. Sits at desk—picks up sheets of paper and reads. Erases and adds lines to writing. Takes a sheet of paper—reads—and with an expression of despair looks blank. MR. FERGUSON enters from R. and goes to MRS. BURNETT.*)

Mr. Ferguson

Mrs. Burnett! (*Pause.*) Mrs. Burnett!

(*MRS. BURNETT looks up to MR. FERGUSON.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Oh, yes. (*Rises—pause.*) Did you succeed?

Mr. Ferguson

Partly so. I could not obtain more than sixty thousand dollars.

Mrs. Burnett

Why—my tiara alone cost thirty-five thousand, and there is my brooch—my rings—

Mr. Ferguson

There's a difference when you buy and when you accept a loan.

Mrs. Burnett

Will that sum cover Mr Burnett's deficiencies?

Mr. Ferguson

No; but that is not the question at present. The firm can pay twenty-five cents on the dollar. There's one creditor to be feared

and that is Mr. Allen. You remain during the meeting in the next room and watch how things are progressing. If it becomes boisterous, and they do not agree, come in and add your money to be divided among them. (MR. FERGUSON *takes several packages from pocket.*) Here is the money.

(MRS. BURNETT *takes packages and locks them in drawer of desk. Speaks in an absent-minded manner at desk.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Yes—yes—if he would only have pity on me and forgive me!

Mr. Ferguson

What did you say, Mrs. Burnett?

Mrs. Burnett

Nothing—nothing—

(MRS. BURNETT *holds her hands to her head and appears to be suffering.*)

Mr. Ferguson

Are you not well?

Mrs. Burnett

It's nothing—I have only a dreadful headache. (*Pause.*) Mr. Ferguson, are Mr. Burnett's deficiencies the only cause of the firm's impending failure?

Mr. Ferguson

No, not entirely; but taken in connection with the hard times and the continual differences, and quarrels, which, I may say, was Mr. Burnett's fault, it could not be averted.

Mrs. Burnett

That's unfortunate.

Mr. Ferguson

Has anybody been here?

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Lederman and Mr. Burnett's father, I believe, are here for over an hour.

Mr. Ferguson

None of the creditors?

Mrs. Burnett

No. (MRS. BURNETT *holding hand to her head and appearing to suffer.*)

Mr. Ferguson

This meeting means everything to you, Mrs. Burnett, and to the firm. I know there will be a great fight—you must try and do the best you can.

Mrs. Burnett

Mr. Ferguson, we never know the value of the things we possess until we are about to lose them. Rest assured I will do all that a woman can do.

Mr. Ferguson

(*Pleadingly.*) Do the best you can (*Exit L.*)

(MRS. BURNETT goes and sits at desk ; leans head on hand in despairing manner. GEORGE BURNETT descends staircase holding papers in his hand. Passes through the room and is about to exit L. MRS. BURNETT sighs deeply. MR. BURNETT turns around and goes towards MRS. BURNETT.)

George

Louise—(*pause*)—Louise! What is the matter?

(MRS. BURNETT looks up—she appears to have been weeping. She rises.

What is it?

(MRS. BURNETT falls into his arms and sobs hysterically)

(*Patting her on the shoulder.*) That's all right. Everything will be all right.

Mrs. Burnett

When I look back into the years we have been married. I now see how good and kind you have been to me—but I fear I will never be able to repay you for your kindness.

(*Disengaging themselves.*)

George

Now what talk is that?

Mrs. Burnett

I fear we will have to part soon.

George

What nonsense has entered your head?

(MRS. BURNETT appears to be in great pain.)

George

Louise, you are not well. I can't understand you. The doctor

has warned you again and again not to do any mental work, but you don't seem to care. (*Pointing to desk excitedly.*) What rubbish is that you are continually writing and pondering over?

Mrs. Burnett

It is your sister's manuscript of a story.

(*GEORGE runs to desk—seizes papers and in a furious manner is about to destroy them. MRS. BURNETT prevents him from doing so.*)

George

What has this confounded story got to do with you?

Mrs. Burnett

Evelyn wants me to put the finishing touches to it—and I want your opinion about one point.

George

I have no time to listen to such trash.

Mrs. Burnett

It will take but a moment.

George

I am in no mood now.

Mrs. Burnett

George, please. It will be a great relief for me.

George

Well, go on.

Mrs. Burnett

The main theme of the story was taken by Evelyn from the tale that Mr. Russell told at our entertainment.

George

(*Eagerly.*) Well?

Mrs. Burnett

Look what your sister has done. She describes the friend whom the British merchant thought was false, a most noble character—a true friend and one who has never broken the code of friendship, and lays all the blame upon his wife.

George

Why does she do that?

Mrs. Burnett

She has good motives for doing so.

George

And how does the story terminate?

Mrs. Burnett

(*Watching him closely.*) She tells her husband all—she promises him that a pure atmosphere will surround their home. He forgives her. They go to a new part of the world—among new people and begin a new life.

George

That's a very nice termination for a story. In real life I hardly think it would happen.

Mrs. Burnett

Why not?

George

Why not?—Suppose a man has a friend whom he cherishes—say almost worship—intrusts him with all his secrets; looks to him for advice and encouragement and one day he finds the friend that he loved more than himself, deceived him.—Do you suppose he can trust him again and look in his eyes as if nothing had happened? Oh, no—we are not so good natured, or, if you choose, not so high-minded.

Mrs. Burnett

But that is his wife.

George

So much the worse.

Mrs. Burnett

And what would you do with such a woman?

George

(*In a harsh tone.*) What I would do with such a woman? (*Emphatically.*) I would take her by the neck and throw her out into the gutter where she belongs. (*Pause.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Is there no such thing as forgiveness?

George

There are some things that we cannot and must not forgive.

Mrs. Burnett

Your sister described her not as a bad woman—she's simply found of romance and a romantic life—if given another opportunity she would be true.

George

That makes no difference. Her infamous crime is too great to be forgiven.

Mrs. Burnett

But no matter what crime a man commits, it is proper he should be forgiven, and, in the eyes of the world, she is a prudent woman that stands by her husband.

George

Yes, in that respect a woman is superior in purity to a man.

Mrs. Burnett

Then the story must end that she is thrown out into the gutter?

George

(*With emphasis.*) Into the gutter, Madam.

Mrs. Burnett

Yes—but, George.—

George

I don't want to hear any more about the subject. Destroy the manuscript—burn it—burn it, I say, I don't want it in my house.
(*Exits L. quickly.*)

(*MRS. BURNETT remains standing with her hands resting on the table like a statue. After prolonged pause.*)

Mr. Burnett

(*Crying out.*) Burn it! Burn it!

(*She goes towards desk—takes the pages of the manuscript and burns them. She opens the drawer of the desk, takes out the money and burns it—walks out triumphantly and in hysterical laughter.*)

Into the gutter! Into the gutter! (*Exits R. I.*)

(*SERVANT enters from R. 2 E.—goes and knocks at L. D. GEORGE enters and SERVANT hands him some cards.*)

George

Show the gentlemen up. (SERVANT *is about to go out.*)

John, bring up also some refreshments and cigars.

(SERVANT *exits R.* and GEORGE *exits L.*)

(Room remains empty for a second. MR. THOMPSON, ALLEN, BELLEW and KEEN enter R.—They all gaze around the room.)

Allen

Beautiful room.

Thompson

Beautifully furnished.

Allen

Beautifully decorated, and perhaps with our money.

Bellew

No doubt. No doubt.

(MR. BURNETT *enters L.*)

George

Good evening, gentlemen.

(*Shakes hands with all.*)

(SERVANT *enters with cigars and refreshments.*)

Be seated and make yourselves at home. Here are some cigars —(*pause.*) You will excuse me, we will be ready in a few minutes.

(*Exits L.* All light cigars and drink and take seats.)

Thompson

I wonder how many thousand dollars this cigar will cost me.

Allen

It will cost me nothing.

Keen

Do you think we are invited here to a picnic, Allen?

Allen

I don't know but I wouldn't take ninety-nine cents on a dollar.

Keen

You are a silver man, Thompson; you should be satisfied with a fifty-three cent dollar

Thompson

I would rather have a fifty-three cent dollar than no dollar at all. If they offer me fifty cents on the dollar I will be satisfied.

Allen

You are all in good humor, this evening. Three of my largest customers have failed this month.

Thompson

Did you get any silver dollars?

(*Laughter.*)

Allen

I would have been well satisfied with tin dollars.

Bellew

Joking aside, we have too many failures anyway.

Allen

I tell you it is all owing to the looseness of our laws. We laugh at the laws of the ancients, but some of them are excellent and most practicable even to-day. Take for example the old Roman law that permitted the creditors of an insolvent debtor to sell him and his wife and children into slavery. Isn't that a great law? (*Laughter.*) If we had such a law there would be no failures.

Keen

Here is a better one —in China they chop his head off.

Allen

That's more practical. (*Laughter.*)

Thompson

The law is all right. The trouble, Allen, is, your debtor's turn is to-day but your own turn may come to-morrow. (*Draws hand across throat. All laugh heartily.*)

Allen

The Roman and Chinese laws I want for my debtors; the American laws are good enough for me, Thompson. (*Puffs his cigar. All laugh. Pours out some wine and drinks.*)

Keen

Really, it was a surprise to me when I heard that Burnett's firm was shaky. We always considered it A1.

Allen

It is said that his wife is very extravagant and that he foolishly allowed her full swing.

Thompson

Next time, Allen, when you lend a man money, be sure to ask full particulars about his wife. (*Laughter.*)

(MR. GEORGE BURNETT, MR. JOHN BURNETT, MR. LEDERMAN and FERGUSON enter L. GEORGE and FERGUSON carry papers.)

George

(*Points to table.*) Gentlemen, be seated. (*All take seats around the table.*) You are our principal creditors and we called this private meeting to see what arrangements we can make for fair settlement. You are all aware my father founded the firm which now consists of Mr. Lederman and myself. The firm has passed through many a crisis, but has never failed. It will depend upon your decision to-night whether the firm will close its doors to-morrow. (*Prolonged silence in the room.*) Mr. Ferguson, please hand the balance sheets to the gentlemen. (MR. FERGUSON hands the balance sheets to one of the creditors.) Gentlemen, this is the financial condition of our firm.

(*They all rise from their seats and form a group, and on top of each other they examine the balance sheet. Pause.—At a glance of the paper they utter expressions of astonishment.*)

Allen

(*Taking balance sheet in his hand and then throwing paper with force on the table.*) I'll be damned if I'll accept such an offer. (*Walks up and down nervously with hands behind back.*) Twenty-five cents on the dollar—that's out of the question.

Thompson

We ought to know at least the cause of this dreadful embarrassment.

Bellew

Why, our bank considered your firm one of the most reliable. I am empowered to accept any reasonable offer, but—

Allen

This is the first time that I have had any dealings with you, and if you think I will accept such an offer, you are entirely mistaken.

George

(*In quiet tone.*) That's the best we can do.

(*All rise—there is a general uproar and they form in group to talk the matter over*)

Thompson

(*Speaking to group*) Let us be a little reasonable. Let us hear the cause of this embarrassment.

(*All turn to their seats except MR. ALLEN who walks up and down the room nervously.*)

Keen

(*At table.*) The firm's embarrassment is a surprise to us all. We would like to hear the cause.

Allen

(*Interrupting, and in a loud voice.*) The cause! I'll tell you the cause. Have you not read in the newspapers of the grand entertainments this man gave with our money—with our money?

George

(*Angrily.*) You are my creditor, but you are in my house.

Burnett, Sr.

Gentlemen, I will tell you the cause.

(*MR. LEDERMAN interruptingly and rising.*)

Mr. Lederman

Mr. Burnett, Mr. Burnett, I will explain the cause—(*pause*) Gentlemen, an employee used the firm's money for private speculation, and has done that for quite a considerable time. In the end he could not meet his liabilities and that, combined with the hard times—

Allen

Who was this employee?

Burnett, Sr.

(*Rising and excitedly.*) No—no—no excuses—gentlemen—the

collapse of this firm will mean that thirty-five years of my honest work has been for nothing ; but I must tell you the truth. It was no employee—it was my—

(MR. LEDERMAN *rising—knocking furiously on table.*)

Lederman

No—no—no, Mr. Burnett, you are too excited ; let me explain.

(*Piano is heard playing first a sad melody, then MRS. BURNETT is heard singing a popular melody with piano accompaniment followed by a sound of hysterical laughter.*)

George

(*To FERGUSON—pointing to R. D.*)—Mr. Ferguson, please tell Mrs. Burnett this is no time to play.

(MR. FERGUSON *risés and goes to R. D.*)

Ferguson

Mrs. Burnett—Mrs. Burnett.

(MRS. BURNETT *enters R. with hair hanging down at back and partly hiding her face. All rise as she enters. Crosses towards staircase—stops and looks at gentlemen.*)

Mrs. Burnett

Good night ! Good night !

Ferguson

(*Aside to MRS. BURNETT.*) This is the time for you to speak. (MRS. BURNETT *looks at FERGUSON with a blank stare and laughs—FERGUSON repeats.*) This is the best time for you to speak. (MRS. BURNETT *laughs.* GEORGE *rising goes towards MRS. BURNETT.*)

George

Louise, please go to your room.

(*She takes no notice of his remark and goes towards the table. Looks at the gentlemen staringly and takes a glass and pours out some wine—drinks—laughs.*)

(GEORGE *rings bell and SERVANT enters.*)

George

(*To servant.*) John, run quickly and tell Dr. Morton to come

here at once. If he is not at home bring any doctor and tell Marie to go after my sister Evelyn.

(Servant exits.)

(GEORGE goes towards MRS. BURNETT and takes her by the arm, leading her towards staircase. She resists and breaks loose from him.)

Mrs. Burnett

(Pushing him from her.) No, no, you want to throw me out into the gutter. Gentlemen, he wants to throw me out into the gutter—his own wife into the gutter.

(GEORGE turns pale and staggers as though about to fall — then goes towards the table and resumes seat. MR. FERGUSON goes to MRS. BURNETT)

Ferguson

Mrs. Burnett, what have you done with the money?

(MRS. BURNETT looks at him and laughs.)

Ferguson

(Aloud to everyone.) Where is the money, Mrs. Burnett?

(MRS. BURNETT laughing.)

Burnett, Sr.

What money, Ferguson?

Ferguson

(Rising from table.) Before the meeting I pawned all her jewels and realized on them sixty thousand dollars which she intended to offer to the creditors.

Burnett, Sr.

(To MRS. BURNETT.) Where is the money?

(MRS. BURNETT laughs.)

Mrs. Burnett

Into the gutter—into the gutter.

Burnett, Sr.

Where did she put the money, Ferguson?

Ferguson

(Pointing to desk.) In that desk.

(BURNETT, SR., runs to desk opens drawers with trembling)

hands and finds drawers empty. DR. MORTON enters quickly R.)

Burnett, Sr.

Louise, for God's sake, tell us what you have done with the money.

(She takes him by the arm and goes down to the fireplace.)

Mrs. Burnett

Into the gutter— *(Pointing towards the fire.)* Into the gutter— *(Laughs.)*

(DR. MORTON goes towards MRS. BURNETT—takes her arm, motions to FERGUSON to take the other. They lead her up the staircase; she resists; screams and laughs and then disappears. MR. BURNETT, SR., examines and finds remnants of the burned money. After a long silence THOMPSON speaks)

Thompson

I will accept the offer.

Keen

So will I.

Bellew

I suppose I will have to do like the rest.

(Pause.)

Thompson

(Indignantly.) Allen what are you waiting for? Have you no human feeling in you?

Allen

I—*(screams are heard)* I accept *(quickly.)*

(All rise except GEORGE. Creditors after bidding good night, exeunt R. 2. GEORGE remains sitting on chair in depressed condition.)

(MR. FERGUSON descends staircase followed by DR. MORTON.)

Ferguson

*(To BURNETT, SR —*Is everything all right?

Burnett, Sr.

Yes.

Dr. Morton

(To GEORGE.) It would be necessary to have someone to watch her until—

Burnett, Sr.

Leave him alone, Doctor, leave him alone.—

Dr. Morton

I am going to send someone to be with her the whole night.

Burnett, Sr.

Doctor, do whatever you think best—is there any immediate danger?

Dr. Morton

Yes—she has a mania with suicidal tendencies—later on I will put her in a private asylum.

(EVELYN enters right with frightened appearance.)

Evelyn

Father, what is the matter?

Burnett, Sr.

Everything is all right now; we have made a satisfactory settlement.

Evelyn

I am glad to hear it. (*Sees GEORGE sitting in a depressed manner and wants to go towards him but her father prevents her.*) What is the matter with George?

Burnett, Sr.

Leave him alone—he is exhausted. (*Calling.*) Lederman take Evelyn home.

(LEDERMAN takes his hat and as he is about to go out with EVELYN, GEORGE rises and goes towards him.)

George

(*Offering hand to LEDERMAN, who takes it.*) I have done you a great injustice. I beg your pardon. Now I can see that you have been my friend—and a true one. From to-day on I will do my best to be worthy of your friendship.

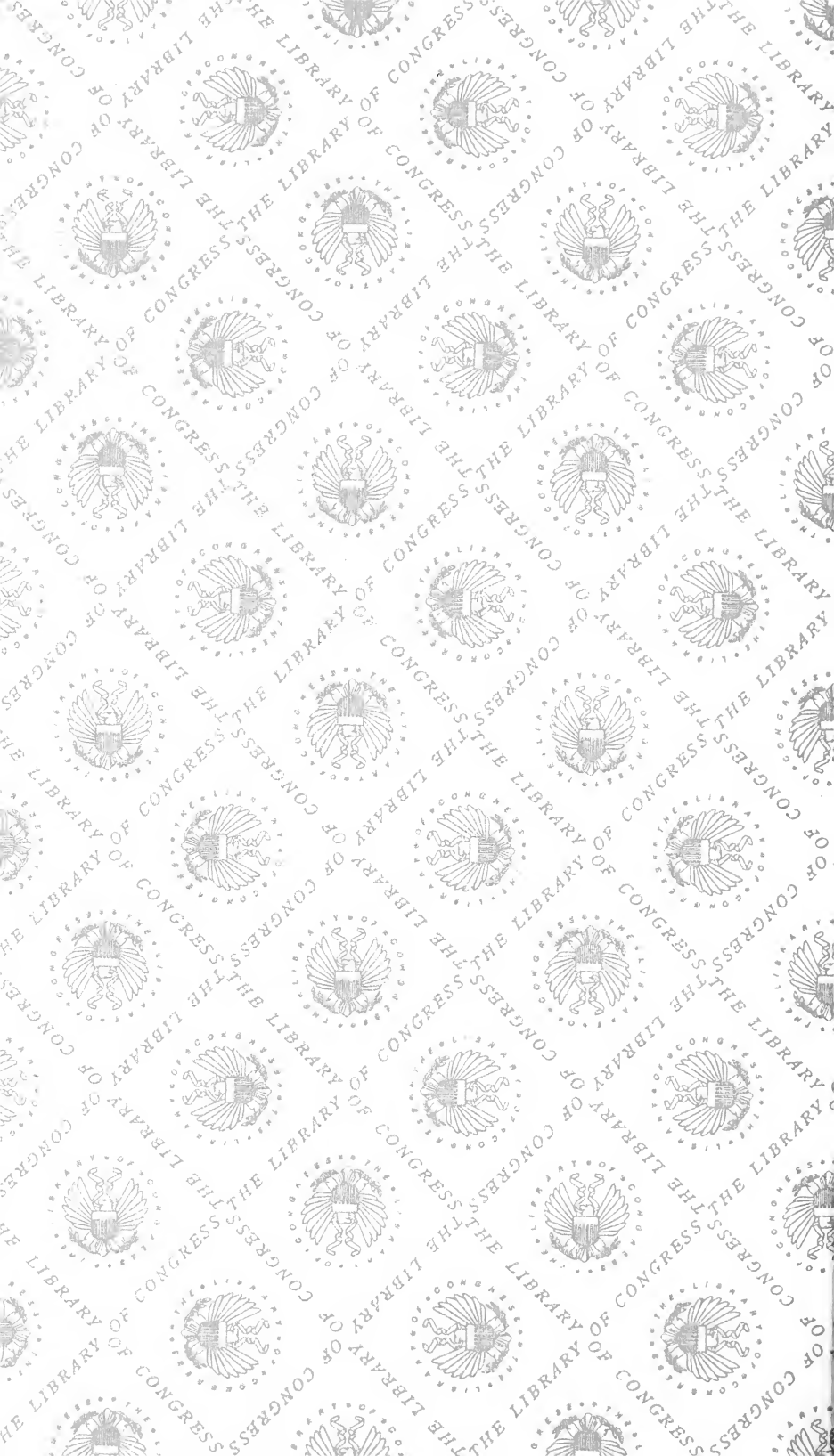
(EVELYN and LEDERMAN exit R. GEORGE goes to table—sits down with head resting on hand and weeps bitterly. CURTAIN falls as MRS. BURNETT'S screams are heard.)

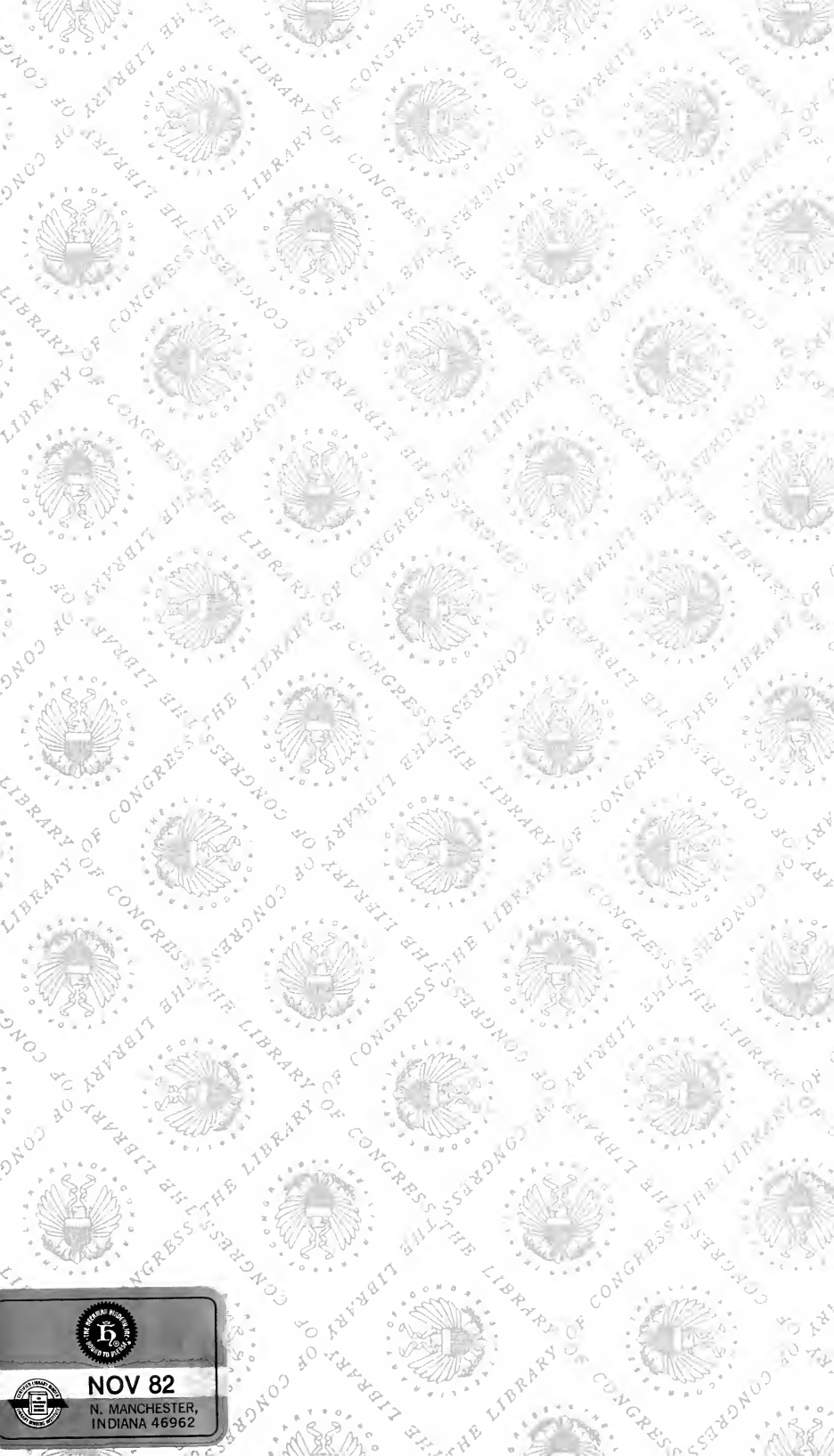
THE END.

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